

J O A N !!!

A

NOVEL.

BY

MATILDA FITZJOHN.

You have no great pretensions to wit or sprightliness of
genius.—I grant it.

MARC. ANTONIN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

.III. JOV.



JOAN!!!

CHAP. I.

THE evening of Lady Cottisbrooke's ball arrived; and a very large and a very elegant party were present to do honor to Lady Almerina, who, with somewhat less condescension than a crowned head would have thought befitting, received the congratulations of the company, suiting her replies exactly to the rank of those who addressed her. About two thirds of the number had been at Mrs. Haccombe's last great rout; and the Miss Assingtons, who knew no joy equal to the mortifying the saucy Lady Morays, had so far exerted their influence, that not only those who had seen their reprehensible deportment towards

Peregrina, but many of the first rank who knew neither the one nor the other party, had adopted the simple Greek head-dress, and one ostrich feather ; and it being more generally becoming than most popular fashions, the few who had it not, felt behind-hand with the world. Mrs. Haccombe, who always transplanted to her own person the embellishments she saw succeed on others, but with additions and improvements of her own, was of the Grecian party ; but she could not confine herself to the single feather, nor the simple hue : she had a forest of various colored plumage, the stems of which were covered with diamonds, pearls, and gold. She was, beyond all competition, the finest in the room ; but Peregrina could not forbear, in the natural love we all bear to our own creations, thinking her simple fashion was spoiled in decorating.

The Lady Morays, with their anxious chaperon, were amongst the last that entered ;

entered ; and dresses were tucked up, and the lines were forming for country dances, when they came in. The universality of the fashion struck them ; and, before they could notice those they came to do honor to, they had faced about to each other to express their dismay. They were forced to digest it hastily ; for Lady Cottisbrooke, who if she had heard of their folly did not chuse to notice it, came forward to meet them, and stopped the music till they should have taken their places, either in the dance or in the adjoining card-room, whither Lady Kerbell, who passionately loved cards and was uncommonly successful, would gladly have retreated, could she have disposed of her tall daughters ; but they, using the privilege of their uncommon height, were looking over the heads of the company, in hope of spying unengaged beaus.

They all three, in no very good humor, sat down at the lower end of the room,

watching the door in hopes of recruits; for the number of *walking gentlemen* appeared small; and they themselves, though bowed at distantly, found no one even to chat with them. A marquis, at whom half the right honorable damsels shot their arrows, was standing up with Lady Almerina Delaford; and when he began to amuse the time of waiting by fine speeches on the super-celestial bliss this anniversary recorded, her ladyship sighed, and thought how idle were long engagements. Lord Surchester, whom, on such an emergency, Lady Kerbell would not have refused, was hand in hand with Mrs. Haccombe. Lady Essex Courtland had been consigned to the marquis's very young brother. The Miss Assingtons had each dignified partners. Even Mrs. Barnby, and Mrs. Hammond with her apricot complexion, had partners. Peregrina, indeed, did not appear to have drawn a prize in this lottery; for she was hemmed in by the Miss Assingtons and their party, who were in high gossip. This
was

was some comfort to the Lady Morays ; and Mr. Haccombe, Sir Edward Bergholt, and Hamilton Courtland, coming from the card-room, their fears were dissipated ; they put their fans in their pockets, stood up, and having adjusted their dress, waited only to be asked.

But Mr. Haccombe alone advancing, each of the young ladies beckoned the man she considered as her own ; and while the nabob was, in the style of his parliamentary orations, observing to the countess that his, *you see*, dancing days were over, excepting indeed that disagreeable dance at court which his situation compelled him to, Lady Grace questioned the mad baronet, in the style of *Edward*, *don't you dance to-night?*

Yes, if I can find any partner but you ! — was his answer, as he turned away.

A young Lady

Lady Susan, less authoritative, said in a lower tone to Captain Courtland, "So, you have kept yourself disengaged? — We were so late, I thought we should never get here: do you know the hair-dresser did not come till six; and then you know there's three of us, so it makes it so late! — But do you dance this dance?"

"Yes, I do," replied Hamilton coloring, and playing with his watch-chain:—"I am engaged to Miss Lamorne."

The mortification was now complete, and the party were ready to quarrel amongst themselves; for Lady Kerbell wished to be gone, and yet thought it right to stay with her daughters, whom, notwithstanding their small chance of dancing, she could not prevail on to play at cards: they sat in everybody's way, for the pleasure of saying ill-natured things within hearing, and distressed Lady Cottisbrooke extremely, by shewing her that the prejudice against them was too great

great for her to overcome it, by inviting any of the elder gentlemen to take them.

The change of partners producing them no better fortune, they all decamped, but not till they had repaid themselves abundantly for their vexations of dress and neglect. Despicable as they were, they had it in their power to make themselves feared ; and it was only till the next morning that they forbore setting their tongues to publish what their eyes, their ears, and their proneness to discover evil, had informed them of. They had perceived something more than usual between Lord Surchester and Mrs. Haccombe ; and the *doux yeux* of the nabob towards Peregrina, when she had gone down the dance, and he came forward to hope she was not fatigued, had not escaped them. Mrs. Barnby, not chusing to engage in the second dance, had flirted with Sir Edward, whose reserve they made use of to increase her culpability. In short, they had con-

ceived a plot that pervaded the whole household of Devonshire-place. Part was true—part was false ; for they involved the innocent and the guilty.

In a very few days, and when new scenes of pleasure had nearly obliterated the remembrance of Lady Cottisbrooke's ball, there appeared in one or two of the least reputable but most fashionable daily prints, some paragraphs reflecting on the *Greek turbaned caps*, and the *emperor of the east*, with a hint that included, more pointedly, the *empress* and the *earl of S—*. Peregrina was the first of the family who saw these libels ; but never having had a *Greek* idea of her head-dress, not guessing who the *emperor of the east* could be, and having no natural turn for scandal, she passed over the paragraphs, and hunted for Irish news. Mrs. Barnby was the next who read them ; and she, as Mrs. Haccombe had not then left her chamber, without telling Miss Lamorne

Lamorne her intention, carried the papers thither.

When breakfast was ready, the ladies appeared with cloudy countenances, unintelligible to incurious Peregrina.—A note was brought to Mrs. Haccombe :—she went away to answer it.—Mr. Haccombe came in, and asked for the news-papers.—Mrs. Barnby replied, they were not yet come, and trod on Peregrina's foot to keep her silent. Sir Edward, who was present, contradicted her.—She bid him then seek them.—He rang, and asked a servant for them.—The man said, they were not come.—Sir Edward, in a fury, called up another and another servant ; but the answer was the same, and he lost all patience. “ They *are* come,” said he : “ I myself have read them ; and so have you, and burnt them, to hide your own disgrace.—You know what the *Greeks* and the *Emperor* and *Empress* mean.—I will not live with such an

infernal troop as ye are—no, not another hour!"

Mr. Haccombe, half rising from the table to repress what he supposed only a fit of frenzy, begged Sir Edward to be quiet, and not alarm Miss Lamorne.—“Miss Lamorne!” he repeated more coolly, and with an ambiguous sneer.—“I alarm Miss Lamorne!—No, Old Dad, it is not *I* who should alarm Miss Lamorne!—She would pity me, could she see the wretch I am.—You leave me scarcely my senses; but I must endure it, and be patient.—And so,” continued he, gulping down his tea, “I must be off; for I intend to have a glorious ride in Hyde-park this morning: and perhaps, Old Dad, you know, I may meet my sweetheart—Hyde-park is a nice place you know, Old Dad, to meet one’s sweetheart!—Good b’ye, ladies!”—Then turning to the piano forte, where Peregrina had just before set up some Scots ballads, he, with

with infinite taste and the nicest correctness, sung and accompanied the plaintive air of Donald, and left Peregrina with the tears in her eyes, and Mrs. Barnby with new but very ill-founded suspicions in her mind.

Mr. Haccombe imputed all to the state of Sir Edward's mind, and, fortunately for some of his connections, gave no credit to what he said, but lamented the obligation imposed on him by his old friend's will, that this ward should reside in his house till he was of age. Mrs. Haccombe came in, took her breakfast, and then, on a wink from Mrs. Barnby, the aunt and niece retired together, leaving the nabob and Peregrina to a sober tête-à-tête, from which the latter would have withdrawn; but Mr. Haccombe stopt her, by catching her hand as she passed, and asking if she was in a hurry. She said, No; and taking her work-bag from the piano forte, she sat down.

Mr. Haccombe began the conversation.—“ I am fearful my unhappy friend Berg-holt sometimes alarms you.”

She answered, by confessing that she could not yet accustom herself to his oddity, and by expressing her concern for his situation.

“ It is to be sure, it must be owned, a very pitiable one—a very pitiable one indeed ! He will be of age, that is to say, *twenty-five*, next year ; and then, by the strange will of his father, he must marry, and with my consent, or on his following birth-day his whole estate lapses to one of our public hospitals.”

Peregrina joined in thinking this a very strange will. Mr. Haccombe did not tell her that it was a will he himself had dictated, when Sir Edward’s father grew so near his end as to be scarcely conscious of what he did. Indeed, this severe clause

was

was not quite of his fabrication : he had contrived it so, as that the valuable estates of the Bergholts should have slid over to the Haccombes ; but the dying baronet had just sense enough to see the virtues of charity. He therefore, being at war with his other relations, named the first public institution he thought on ; and so the will stood.

Fearing, perhaps, that Miss Lamorne's visible sympathy might be followed by inquisitiveness, he attempted to change the subject of his discourse ; but her countenance expressed such pensive interest for the unhappy maniac, that Mr. Haccombe's jealousy was alarmed, and no more delicate way of satisfying himself occurring, he, with a made-up countenance and affected archness, which sat wonderfully well on his Ganges complexion, began to rally her on a supposition that, notwithstanding his derangement, Sir Edward had found a place in her heart.

Not

Not very well pleased at an idea that she thought impeached her prudence, she replied, in a manner that convinced him he was safe and wrong, that, as a fellow-creature suffering under the greatest possible calamity, she from her heart pitied Sir Edward ; but that she should suspect herself as far more insane, could she entertain a sentiment for him beyond those of respect and commiseration.

The eastern chief could scarce contain his rapture ; for, in the plenitude of his self-conceit, he fancied that the firmness with which she spoke indicated not only her indifference to Sir Edward, but something like a predilection for himself—at least a wish that he should be satisfied he was without a rival. He then entered into a little flattering chit-chat, and ended with his usual offers of liberality, which, as not needing then, she declined.

He-

He withdrew to dress for the minister's levee; and Mrs. Barnby, as if waiting his exit, came in immediately, and, with less smile than usual on her countenance, desired Miss Lamorne to be ready to go out with her exactly at one o'clock. It was then about half past eleven; and Peregrina remained alone till the carriage came, when Mrs. Barnby again appeared, and, to her companion's astonishment, was at such a loss whither to go, that she ordered the coachman to drive for an airing to Hamps-
tead. Contrary to her usual custom, she seemed little inclined to talk; and Peregrina willingly gave into her humor.

CHAP. II.

IT was the morning's news-paper that had so mysteriously deranged the family, and sent these two ladies out on their un-plotted pilgrimage. Mrs. Barnby, whom Mrs. Haccombe had recently bribed almost wholly to her interest, had seen the dangerous paragraphs, and shewn them instantly to her aunt, who now considered herself as utterly ruined. In the utmost despair, she prophesied that Mr. Haccombe would at least insist on a separation, before it was in her power to secure herself by re-crимinating with any prospect of credit; for her own late attentions, bestowed on Peregrina, took from her all hope of impeaching her character: and a separation, under circumstances so much against her, she dreaded; not as reflecting on her morality,

rality, but as it would, she was certain, deprive her of the eclat she now lived in; and in which her whole happiness was centered. She saw Lord Surchester was not to be trusted, for making good to her any loss she might sustain for his sake; and she had nothing but poverty and ignominy before her.

The earl was not at all more easy in his mind; for he had seen the libel, and having too frequently paid smart money on such occasions, to the no small injury of his otherwise impaired income, he would instantly have refuted the calumny by absconding: but this violent method did not perfectly suit his views; for he had suffered his passion for Peregrina to get the empire of his fickle heart, and, while she remained in Devonshire-place, he wished to have access there. In haste, therefore, he had dispatched his trusty valet with a note to Mrs. Haccombe, in which he begged her to admit him, soon after one o'clock,

o'clock, to a private audience. He named that hour, because he had fixed it with her husband for meeting him at the Cockpit ; but him he could easily bilk, and would willingly, on an occasion so important to his happiness.

To keep the house clear of observers it was, therefore, that the obliging Mrs. Barnby went out with Peregrina.

Lord Surchester had opened the business with professions of never-dying love, and extreme concern that the *divinest creature on earth, the only woman that really had it in her power to bless mankind*, should, in return for the condescending pity she had bestowed on a passion that must otherwise have hurried him into a precipitate grave, be exposed to the ill-humour, and perhaps brutality, of a creature so despicable as her husband. He talked as if he took it for granted that Mr. Haccombe had seen the libel and comprehended it, and as if his jealousy,

jealousy, his rage, and his separation of the lovers, must be the necessary consequence ; and to all this his lordship, notwithstanding his fine speeches, quietly talked of submitting : nor would he, perhaps, have been at the trouble of seeking an interview with the lady, had it not been to advise her not to suffer unrevenged, but to insist, when she was compelled to quit her friend, that Mr. Haccombe should dismiss from his house his *protégée* Miss Lamorne.

Mrs. Haccombe, alarmed as she was at first, had, in the time of waiting for Lord Surchester, duly considered the impending danger ; and her terrors did not increase with her investigation. She saw, indeed, that her situation was critical ; but she had resources in her cunning that she could rely on : she was convinced she must be cautious, but she saw no reason to despair.

Her

Her courage in some measure balked the earl; and by arguments drawn from *prudence*, and supported by *his restless anxiety for her comfort*, he endeavoured to get loose; but finding that impossible, he concerted with her the best means of escaping observation; and, as she was not inclined to give up any of his attendance on her, she was forced to approve of a plan he proposed for her security, though it was far from being agreeable to her: this was, that, for a blind to his views, he should seem, only *seem*, to address himself more particularly than ever to Miss Lamorne.— Having obtained Mrs. Haccombe's promise that she should take no offence at his conduct, which he called the universe to witness nothing but his *devouring passion* for her could induce him thus to alter, he took his leave, that he might be furnished by some other engagement with a due apology to Mr. Haccombe for disappointing him.

On the return of the ladies from their airing, Mrs. Barnby flew to Mrs. Haccombe, who was beginning to dress for the evening. She learnt the accommodation that had been agreed on, not at all to her satisfaction; for she thought, if Lord Surchester found it necessary to set up a sham mistress in the family, she herself was a much more proper object than Miss Lamorne. She therefore blamed the plan, as likely to irritate Mr. Haccombe by exciting his jealousy, and to bring about his dismission of Lord Surchester from the house, where, as he had done all the dirty work the nabob at present wanted, his presence would not be much coveted.

Mrs. Barnby was not pleased with Peregrina, for her presumption in being the first object of the earl's recollection. Mrs. Haccombe was angry with her, because she was to enjoy a few of those smiles and falsehoods she thought herself exclusively entitled to from her lover; and the two ladies

ladies sat down to dinner completely out of humor : but the aunt's interests made her disguise it, by extraordinary civility to her husband ; and the niece, who saw the drift of her cringing, and knew her ascendancy, feared displeasing her or offending Peregrina, either of which misfortunes might have ruined her farther schemes. Mr. Haccombe appeared to be ignorant of what had so alarmed them ; and Sir Edward, with a contracted brow and a scrutinizing eye, ate his dinner in silence, and departed.

They all met again at a superb private concert, where the usual circle of their friends greeted them. The Lady Morays, without their mama, came to see the effect of their wit, and were loud in their unintelligible titter when they saw Miss Lamorne, whom the alteration they had procured her had rendered a little vain, dressed *a la Grecque*. Had she known the pointed sarcasms they were uttering against her, it would not have affected her, now that she saw

saw her party so much the superior ; but she was very much hurt, when Sir Edward Bergholt came up, and leaning over the back of her chair, said, in rather a low voice, "Miss, what do you wear that foolish head-dress for ? I wish you would give it me, and I would burn it."—He spoke seriously ; and when he was serious, what he said carried weight. He said with energy, " Promise me never to appear in it again !"

—The fear that he was growing violent, and would be heard, prevented her questioning his authority ; and she hastily gave him her word. The Miss Assingtons joined her, and she presently forgot the circumstance. Between the acts, and while refreshments were handing round, Lady Cottisbrooke beckoned her to a vacant seat close to her, and at a distance from others. With an encouraging smile, and something like timid hesitation, she said, " My dear Miss Lamorne, will you forgive me, if I take an undue liberty with you ? May I beg of you to forbear distinguishing yourself by

the peculiarity of your dress? I am not fond of young people's trying their strength by a party: the victory is scarcely worth having—and a defeat is irreparable."

With astonishment and humility, Peregrina heard, and replied, that she was extremely sorry the singularity of her head-dress, which had at first been the effect of accident, should have incurred censure;—that she confessed herself wrong, and should be happy to correct her opinion by Lady Cottisbrooke's.

"That is just the answer I expected from your good sense," replied the countess. "You must have seen already, my dear, the disagreeable predicament into which that singularity has drawn you, otherwise I would not have ventured to speak thus freely."

"I see it clearly," answered Peregrina, imagining only that her ladyship meant Sir Edward's rough speech behind her chair, which she did not know had been overheard—“I am very much obliged to your ladyship,

ship, and hope you will always speak as freely; for I know little of the world."

"Since you give me permission," returned Lady Cottisbrooke, "I will use it whenever I think my experience can be of service to you. You will find, my dear, some who will flatter you out of good-will towards you, many more who will do it from a less laudable motive; but of this be assured, that you will find none more sincere than myself, though multitudes will better recommend themselves to your favor; and remember, I speak from my heart, when I say I should be happy to serve you, and that, whenever your residence in Devonshire-place becomes either unpleasant or imprudent, I shall be proud to receive you in New Norfolk-street."—Viotti's bow rapped *silence* on the desk, and the conversation ended.—Sir Edward, who seemed to rise from the ground behind Lady Cottisbrooke's chair, cried out, "Bravo! I am now resolved;" and capering out of the room, appeared no more.

“ *Unpleasant or imprudent?*” repeated Peregrina to herself.—“ Lady Cottisbrooke’s civilities are very flattering ; but how is it possible my being in Devonshire-place can ever be *unpleasant* or *imprudent*?—*Unpleasant* I am sure it can never be ; but by *imprudent*, I suppose she means that it may be a situation too expensive for me. Well, when I next see her, I will tell her how generous Mr. Haccombe is to me.”

From this concert the party were engaged to a ball ; and here it was that Lord Surchester commenced his plan of *dissembled dissimulation*, and leaving Mrs. Haccombe to dance with a commoner, secured Peregrina for the two first dances ; and was so extremely diligent in making use of his tongue and eyes, and so very lavish of his adoration, that Peregrina supposed him tipsy, and felt quite comforted when she exchanged his peership for modest Hamilton Courtland.

CHAP. III.

FROM this period, an odd and unintelligible change seemed to take place in the conduct of the major part of the family towards their guest ; who perceived it, but, chusing rather to distrust her own judgment than the kindness of such friends, wished not to give the idea credit, by ruminating on it. Mrs. Haccombe, though not uncivil in general, now and then, especially in public and in their large parties, indulged herself in some of those bouncing airs towards Peregrina, with which she seldom failed, sooner or later, to treat those she had no interest in conciliating. Mrs. Barnby had got a pouting habit, which Peregrina called low spirits, and attributed to Sir Edward's unhappy situation ; and, relaxing her assiduities, she frequently now

gave Miss Lamorne opportunities of exercising herself in her favorite accomplishments, by suffering her to remain alone.

But, whatever fear these changes might have produced in her mind, respecting the propriety of her remaining the guest of the Haccombe family, was done away by the reduplicated kindness of the master of the house, who, with an openness of attachment and a frankness of conduct that wanted only a better motive than craft to have been highly laudable, literally behaved to her as to a daughter. Perceiving and approving her resumed sedulity in her elegant occupations, and looking forward to them for pleasure and the gratification of his vanity, whenever fate or the laws should unmarry him, he insisted on Peregrina's having those assistances that might facilitate her labors and perfect her skill; and of which, on a comparison of her attainments with those of her friends, who had had greater opportunities

portunities of instruction, she conceived herself to stand very much in need.

Her hours now passed more pleasantly and more rationally than before: her morning engagements at home kept her from morning folly and dissipation: she enjoyed the evening amusement as a relaxation from severe attention: she seemed now to have something above the *butterfly-character*; and she received, with modest pleasure, the praises bestowed on her drawings and her musical execution. She observed less Mrs. Haccombe's relaxed guard over her temper, and Mrs. Barnby's growing indifference; and there were but two, and those apparently trifling particulars, which she could wish amended in her situation. The one was Lord Surchester's attention to her in public: the other was the wearisome impertinence of Sir Edward Bergholt, who, childishly interfering with whatever was going forward, would now interest himself in her pursuits. Sometimes

He would for half an hour, when she was drawing, sit down with her, and converse most seriously and most agreeably, discovering to her pity intellects incomparably formed by nature, and a heart whose strong feelings were destruction to its possessor. He would talk in a strain of melancholy till the tears trickled down her cheeks : he would then laugh aloud at her, and scamper away to some new trifle.

Mrs. Haccombe, never a favorite with the maniac, was now worse treated by him than ever ; and Lord Surchester was frequently restrained from resentment at his sarcastic wit, by nothing but the privilege of his condition. No one escaped the lash of his satire, or the teasing of his nonsense, at which it was impossible always to forbear laughing ; a circumstance which never failed to render him serious and violent.

Matters went on thus for about three weeks, and, the town being at the fullest,
Peregrina

Peregrina was introduced to every species of dissipation and amusement; but the gayer pleasures had lost their seductive dangers with their novelty; and, though delighted with all she saw, her heart continued steady to its early preferences; and an anxious thought, that would sometimes cross her gayest moments, how she was to live in future, or how, after such indulgences, to accommodate herself to the comparative hardship of earning a livelihood, made her pensive when others were intoxicated with joy.

It was one morning, after an evening spent at a masked ball, when Lord Sur-chester, heated with wine, and franked, as it were, by the character of the entertain-ment, had been so troublesome as to make her angry and cautious, that Mr. Hac-combe requested one of his not unfrequent interviews in the library. She found him still graver than usual, and began to misconstrue the thoughtfulness of his aspect

into displeasure. He drew a chair for her, and, with a degree of agitation that still more than his natural failure of ideas obstructed his speech, he began to bestow commendations, and to repeat those expressions of interest and parental regard with which he had commenced his influence over her, and from which, to do him justice, he had never, *in his words or his actions*, receded. With an apology for his presumption in coming forward to give advice, he next proceeded to remark on the conduct of Lord Surchester, of whom Peregrina was astonished to hear him speak in terms the most vilifying: he hinted at that bond of union between them which he could not but know would suggest itself, even unmentioned, to her mind, namely, the earl's active and unconcealed services; but he seemed to wish it to be understood, that for these acts of friendship he had paid, as he really had, to their full value.

But

But the matter on which he wished to speak, was that feature in his lordship's character by which, without caution, *Peregrina* might, either in her peace or her reputation, suffer ; and on this point he labored with a degree of energy that made her regard him with increased gratitude. She saw not that selfishness, jealousy, and a passion scarcely more justifiable than that of which he warned her, were, in this instance, his dictators : she saw only that a man, who had no stimulative to kindness but voluntary charity, no obligation to her but that of his own generous heart, was standing up, the monitor, the protector of a creature, who, but for him, might have been friendless and wretched. With difficulty she forbore, while thus warm with gratitude, and enamored of his goodness, to reveal to him every circumstance of her situation ; and with still greater difficulty did the crafty champion of distressed damsels, when he saw her thus off her guard,

adhere to the prudent resolution he had formed. She however, in her reply to his cautions, expressed such terror of going wrong, and such an unaffected preference of a clear conscience to the trash of the whole world, that he was not sorry he had reserved his fire. They parted still better pleased than ever with each other, he assuring her that during his life, and after his death, he would prove his care for her.

It gave Mr. Haccombe no pleasure to be forced thus to remove his vigilance from his wife, whom he wished to detect, to Miss Lamorne, whom it was his nearest concern to preserve. Still more inconvenient was this real transfer of Lord Surchester's attention, as it robbed him of the hope of getting speedily rid of his wife. However Mrs. Haccombe might be imposed on, it was impossible any one else should be deceived, for the earl had made too great use of the liberality his duped mistress

mistress had allowed him ; and though, in their now much less frequent tête-à-têtes, he always endeavoured to soothe her, and to make her of his counsel, by telling her to what lengths his anxiety for her safety would prompt him to carry his dissimulation, she had fears not to be repressed, and her brain was at work to ease her heart.

CHAP. IV.

IN two days after Peregrina's conference with Mr. Haccombe, and before the impression it had made on her sensibility was at all effaced, she received by the general post a letter ! the first letter she had ever paid postage for ; for it need not be observed that neither Lady Jemima, nor the Miss Byrams, had ever honored her with their notice.—The post-mark was Oxford ; and opening it with trembling curiosity, she read :

“ Be prudent ! be secret ! If you do not destroy this, keep the knowledge of it wholly to your own heart, and you may be safe—no otherwise, believe me.

“ Who

“ Who I am, why I interest myself for you, I need not tell you; and it is in vain for you to enquire. At this distance, I am acquainted not only with your situation, but with your actions, and not unfrequently with your thoughts; and, as I mean to employ this knowledge solely for your benefit, I trust you will return the obligation in the only way I wish—by attention.

“ You think yourself one of the happiest creatures on earth; but believe me, you are most wretched. I know less of your origin than of your merits; but I understand you were *adopted* by, if not the *offspring* of, that worthless woman Lady Jemima Byram. I find you now anew adopted by people as unworthy; and, without the interposition of such a friend as myself, I see not how you can escape their nets.

“ Your chief friend, in the house you are in, is the master of it; and in him you have the most implicit confidence. I blame
you

you not ; for, unless you had his evil endowments, you could not detect his motives. Never disposed to the command of his affections, he has indulged them to satiety ; and now, in his more advanced years, having acquired a habit of craft, the open field of pleasure has lost its charms, and he must circumvent before he can enjoy.

“ Chance has thrown you in his way ; but your disposition, and the steadiness of your principles, awe him. What you, in the ingenuousness of your heart, praise in him as fatherly tenderness, is a passion he dares not avow ; and, while you bless him as a virtuous parent, you encourage him as a vicious lover.

“ Could you compare his manners now with what they were before your arrival, you would be alarmed. Home *then* had no charm for him ; *now* he is seldom absent from it. His amusements were *then* among

among men; *now* he is of all your female parties, hovering over you, and grinning away your fair fame, while he flatters you. His propensity was gambling in all its modifications; on 'Change amongst the monied men, at Brookes's with the unmonied. Now he seems to have no enjoyment in the vicissitudes of chance: he boasts himself cured of his folly—he is laughed at for its remedy.

“ Of such a man beware! ’Till you hear farther from me, make no visible alteration in your conduct, but rely on my vigilance for your safety. Conceal, as you value your safety, all knowledge of this dangerous character. Be cheerful, be gay, but be innocent; and if my skill informs me you act as I wish, you shall shortly hear again from your

GOOD GENIUS.”

CHAP. V.

PEREGRINA was waiting for her music-master when this letter was brought to her; and, excepting the presence of Sir Edward Bergholt, who was attentively reading a book he always carried in his pocket, she was alone. Not suspecting that there was need of privacy in opening a letter that came by a conveyance so little secret, she had broken the seal; and, as she proceeded, grew too much absorbed by the contents to recollect the necessity of quitting the room. Sir Edward seemed unconscious of what passed, and she re-perused the letter without interruption; and then, too much disturbed to continue her playing, from which she had been called off, she took up her work.

Sir

Sir Edward, like a man who thinks it unpolite to leave an only companion to their own thoughts, made her start from her reverie by clapping the leaves of his book together, and putting it up. He then began a conversation :—

“ So, miss, I suppose you have had a letter from your mama ! ”

“ I have no mother ! ”

“ O, what a fib ! — Well, then it is from your papa ! ”

“ I have no father ! ”

“ O for shame ! — Why, don’t we all know that Lady Jemima Byram is your mama ; and that old impudent jackanapes of a lord, that *my* mama is so fond of, is your papa ! ”

“ Good heaven ! Sir Edward,” said Peregrina raising her eyes from her work ; “ how can you talk so ? — I beg your pardon,” she added

added more mildly ; " I forgot myself."—Then recollecting her letter, and its uncomfortable contents, she burst into tears ; and he quitted the room.

Clementi came presently ; and with great difficulty she got through her lesson, from which she flew to her own apartment, to reconsider the caution she had received. She could not doubt the good intention of the writer : it seemed inconsistent with the character of an assassin. She was lost in conjecture, but inclined to give all possible credit to the monition.

Here was now a fatal alloy infused into every cup of pleasure the world could offer her ; and, however salutary it might prove in the end to herself, the beverage was rendered intolerably unpalatable. It was the hardest task imaginable to learn to distrust where she had had every reason for confidence. The distress of her mind would have operated too forcibly on her spirits, had

had not an engagement to a grand dinner, and the opera, obliged her to turn her thoughts towards her dress. She again revised her letter ; and concluding, from its tenor and its injunctions, that she was to persist in her usual habits of life, she did not dare decline the party for the day.

At night, when she retired to rest, the singular event of the morning destroyed all inclination to sleep ; and she could not forbear casting about in her mind who could be this unknown friend, who seemed so well acquainted with her situation, and boasted the scrutiny of her thoughts. Lady Cottisbrooke was the person most likely ; but she was at Margate, for the benefit of Lady Essex Courtland's health ; and it was hardly probable, either that she had removed to Oxford, or that she should so conceal the interest she had before avowed for her.

Whether

Whether or not the advice came from her, she had a great inclination to make her acquainted with it, and consult her on the steps she should pursue ; and, in hope of hearing she would soon be in town, she the next morning, meeting Sir Edward in her way to the drawing-room, asked him when he had seen Captain Courtland.

“ I saw him yesterday.”

“ Do you know when Lady Cottisbrooke comes to town again ? ”

“ No ; I do not.”

“ I wish you would learn.”

“ Why, what is it to you, Miss ? ”

“ Lady Cottisbrooke has always been very kind to me, and I always wish to see her.”

“ I do not think you will see her before the winter. I told her not to come.”

“ I wish then I knew how to direct to her,” said Peregrina, a little off her guard.

“ Why,

“ Why, what have you got to say ? ”

“ O, nothing very particular ! ” replied she, coloring at the want of caution she had betrayed :—“ only I think it would be respectful to write to her ; for she has always expressed a friendship for me—and in my situation (she continued with a deep sigh) I may often want a friend, and a home.”

Sir Edward skipped up the stone staircase four or five stairs at a time ; and Peregrina saw he paid no attention to what she said.

He had just quitted her, when a servant came with the usual message from Mr. Haccombe, which she obeyed less willingly than ever.

After the accustomed etiquette and professions, he asked her how Lord Surchester had behaved to her the preceding evening.

“ He was very troublesome at dinner ; and I was fearful would have continued so at the

the opera, had not the Lady Morays beckoned him into their box, as you saw."

" Well, my dear Miss Lamorne ! he has gone greater lengths than I thought any man would have dared to have gone, with a man of my—I mean, my character, as a man of—you understand me—a man of honor.—He had the assurance to make proposals to me for you, my dear Miss Lamorne ! "

" For me, sir ?—Sure it is impossible ! "

" Don't misunderstand me, my dear !—I do not mean proposals—honorable proposals : but he gave me to understand, in so many words, what was tantamount to—that if I chose it he would make you a very handsome settlement."

" Good God ! " exclaimed Peregrina—" am I reduced then so low ?—And pray, Sir, what did you say ? I hope you told him I should hear of it ; and that I would never meet him again."

" No,

“ No, no, my dear madam ! Fair and softly ; that’s always my way : it’s the way I have got forward all my life. I always think of the oak and the willow. My motto is, *Je plie et ne romps pas*—that’s my motto.”

“ But, Sir, what answer did you give him ? I hope he understands that it is an insult I never shall forgive.”

“ Why, between friends, my dear madam, tho’ I despise Lord Surchester as much as you can, and think him a very bad man—there is a little affair between us just now, that I want him to carry through for me ; for he has very good borough interest ; and it will be some thousands in my way, if it succeeds. But, depend on me, I will take care of you. I should not chuse to make such a man my enemy, because there is no saying what such a man will say when provoked. . . But I told him in so many words that you were under my protection, and

that I should on no consideration give up my interest in you. And on this you may depend."

The peer himself was announced at this moment; and Peregrina, with an increase of distress, retired in haste before she was seen.

The few hours that were passed of this day had produced more than their share of uneasiness to her. She had learnt from Sir Edward, that an idea was abroad of her being the daughter of Lady Jemima and Lord Surchester; and now she heard that she was pursued by his lordship with the basest intention. The former suggestion she knew to be idle, and it might exist only in the wild conceit of the reporter; but what she had heard from Mr. Haccombe was important; and when she recollects that she had no firmer a reliance, than on the honor of a man she had been taught to distrust, she became almost stupefied with horror.

CHAP. VI.

It was some relief to Peregrina's agitated mind, to hear, in the course of the day, that her volunteer guardian—the man she was most afraid of, was about to quit London for a few days: such a respite entirely prevented any new distress from him; and she had leisure at least for rumination; but rumination could do little where there were so few first principles to work on. As an application to Lady Cottisbrooke might possibly betray her into a disclosure of what had awakened her suspicion, and forfeit the friendship of her ladyship, or whoever else might be the writer of the mysterious letter, she was, on consideration, fearful of risking the measure, and could only resolve to wait patiently, in hope of the arrival of a second monitory epistle; but how she was to merit

even that, she was ignorant—she was told it depended on herself—but how could she square her conduct by a rule not given her? which rule she was nevertheless bound to observe!

Believe a man in his own way

Mrs. Haccombe had continued her odd behaviour to Miss Lamorne, with all the variation of polite displeasure, till the evening of the day when Mr. Haccombe went into the country, and when at Ranelagh Lord Surchester's assiduities had been so troublesome, and his tongue so unrestrained, that, after having warned him not to oblige her to represent his behaviour to her friends, she left that end of the party where he was, and getting close to Mrs. Haccombe, she told her she believed Lord Surchester had drank too much, and she wished he might be kept at a distance from her. Mrs. Haccombe, who had with no favorable sentiments seen him thus unnecessarily cautious, if it was caution, willingly took Peregrina under her protection, tell-

telling her it was only people who were very much used to the world that could keep the men in order after dinner. She then consigned her to the care of Mrs. Barnby, who had been between Mrs. Haccombe and the earl; and then dexterously slipping herself into that place, under pretence of keeping him away from Miss Lamorne, but in reality to keep him to herself, she linked her arm within his, and continued thus vigilant in her duty towards her *protégée* all the evening: but Mrs. Barnby could not so easily brook the removal.— She pouted all the night, and would scarcely speak to Peregrina. When seated in the carriage to return home, Miss Lamorne made her acknowledgments to Mrs. Haccombe for her obliging care, and expressed herself, without reserve, very much offended at Lord Surchester's freedom of conversation, which was such as she never before had heard. She felt not at all intimidated by perceiving that he had the good opinion of her protectress, who seemed de-

furious that all should be attributed to excess of wine—His lordship had *the best heart in the world*—he was a most elegant, agreeable man ; but Miss Lamorne, in *her* situation, was very right to avoid conversation with him. The great disparity of their ranks would certainly render any attention on his part a matter of public notice :—she certainly could not be too cautious ;—for though Lord Surchester was certainly *a most agreeable man*, and she herself and every other woman of rank and fashion understood such rattling behaviour and were accustomed to it, yet she did not take on herself to say that his lordship was a bit better than the rest of the world : and it might do an obscure young woman great mischief to be noticed by him.

“ I believe it can do nobody much good,” interrupted Mrs. Barnby in a mousing tone.

“ Indeed ! ”

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Haccombe, after a pause that indicated surprise.

"No indeed," replied the niece tauntingly—"I do not think such a man's notice is for any body's reputation; and if he goes on as he does now, I think Mr. Haccombe should know it."

"Why, heyday!" cried the aunt—"Lucy! what is the matter with you now?"

"Nothing new, I assure you—But I shall certainly tell my uncle what was the subject of Lord Surchester's conversation to Miss Lamorne—it was very little short of persuading her to elope with him."

"Indeed it is very true," interposed Peregrina; "and upon my word, my dear Mrs. Barnby, I should think myself very much obliged to you if you would mention it to Mr. Haccombe, when he comes home; for it grows worse and worse."

“ I think so, my dear,” answered Mrs. Barnby ; “ I expected every moment to see you quit us with him.”

“ I hope you had not so bad an opinion of me,” Miss Lamorne rejoined. “ I hope nobody in the world could tempt me to depart from decorum in the slightest degree ; I am sure, if I know myself, I would rather die than do wrong : but, as for Lord Surchester, it is no merit to be deaf to him ; for I think, though I know it is only my ignorance, that he is the most disagreeable man I ever saw.”

“ It were well, my dear,” returned Mrs. Barnby, “ if *all women* thought so ; but I fear there are some who are not so nice as you, and yet ought to be more so.”

Mrs. Haccombe, by suffering these last words to irritate her, took them to herself, and replied, “ You had better not be quite so free with your tongue, Lucy.”

Pere-

Peregrina now feared a violent quarrel between the ladies, of which, though she knew not the cause, she wished not to witness the progress: but the last sentence seemed to have awed sweet Mrs. Barnby, and, with a sort of clumsy address, she pretended to direct the meaning of what she said to some other lady with whom Lord Surchester had flirted—she did not dare explain or apologise—that would have been to have avowed the importance of a misconception; but she tacked and veered till she brought all right again, and they arrived good friends in Devonshire-place.

CHAP. C 4 CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

IT was Peregrina's custom, when ready, always to be in her place at the hour of meals without waiting a message from a servant, a ceremony which she thought ill became her dependent state; and on the following day she had to wait, in company with Sir Edward Bergholt, upwards of half an hour, while the ladies finished the duties of their toilet. A servant came in with a message from a person waiting, who wished to have seen Mr. Haccombe had he been at home; but he being absent, he had requested an audience of Sir Edward, who in one of his moping fits was sunk in one corner of the room: he ordered the man to be introduced, and Peregrina was a little fearful lest it might be some one not acquainted with his infirmity. She would have

have retired, that at least she might not have witnessed a distressing scene; but the room had but one door, and the stranger stood so that she could not conveniently pass him; so she sat down again.

The man produced from his pocket a letter, which he gave to Sir Edward, saying that he was ordered not to return without an answer.

“ Who sent you ?”

“ I do not know the gentleman, Sir. I am a waiter at the Portland Coffee-house.”

“ And from whom are you to have an answer ?---The letter is directed to Mr. Haccombe.”

“ I was told, Sir, to bring it here, and to get an answer.”

“ But nobody, except the person it is directed to, I suppose, can give you one ? and he is out of town.”

“ I do not know as to that, Sir. I fancy you could ; for I was bid not to come back without one. I fancy it is something in a hurry.”

“ Stay ; I will send it up to Mrs. Haccombe,” said Sir Edward, ringing the bell.

He did so ; but the messenger he sent instantly returned, and said that his mistress’s door was locked.—She was very busy, and desired that any body would just look at the contents of the letter, and send an answer.

Sir Edward then broke the seal : his brow became contracted into its severest frown : his pale color changed to a still more livid hue ; and his hand shook perceptibly. He enquired, in an agitated tone and manner, where the gentleman who sent the letter was to be found, and then went out with the messenger, as if to seek him.

Not

Not long after, the ladies came to the dining parlor, and sat down to dinner, at which Sir Edward soon rejoined them, apologising for his absence by his having gone in quest of a person whom he had missed. No farther enquiry was made, and the matter passed without comment.

The business on which Mr. Haccombe had, most reluctantly, quitted London, was of the electioneering species, and detained him longer than was expected, or had been hoped. In the mean time, life proceeded as usual in Devonshire-place. Lord Surchester was an almost incessant visitor, and tho' he gave Peregrina little cause to complain of his behaviour, his passion for her was not totally concealed. Sir Edward Bergholt was as incessant a torment to Mrs. Haccombe, who seemed to find some pleasure in venting the ill humor he excited, on Peregrina, till she began to think seriously of it. Still, however, she was of all her parties, and had nothing to

endure but a waywardness of temper, perhaps not to be conquered.

There came a letter by the post directed for Miss Lamorne. She made no doubt that it was from her *good genius*, but the writer scarcely deserved the dignified appellation; for it was from Mr. Haccombe himself, who thought proper on paper to renew those protestations of attachment his tongue was so prone to; and he had indulged himself through three pages in expressions of paternal regard, which the infusion of suspicion had depreciated much in the estimation of the reader.

The following day was more propitious, and, when alone, she received this second letter from Oxford.

“ You have secured for ever my friendship and esteem; and it shall be my sole care to protect you. Continue to act as you have done. Shew no suspicion. Let your

your reason be vigilant, but let your heart be at ease.

“ My art tells me you are puzzled and alarmed at Mrs. Haccombe’s caprice of humor. Unless I am mistaken, it has a deep foundation. Her character is deposited in the hands of the earl her friend: he is tired of the charge. She has been apprehensive that the world and her husband would hear too much: to blind both, she permits his lordship’s attention to you. He has embraced the opportunity; but, believe my infallible art, his love returns no more to her. He is poor. I know she supplies him with money; but you are his present idol. Avoid him, as you would a serpent. He is a pestilence stalking in society.

‘ Do not, to relieve yourself from Mrs. Haccombe’s pettishness, confide in Mrs. Barnby. She is as bad as any one of the trio. I cannot fathom all her arts: my

skill

skill fails me there. But I know the angles for all male hearts—she has none of her own.

“ That strange medley of sense and non-sense, the nursing baronet, merits your compassion, and can never excite your fear or rouse your caution. He has been hardly treated. His blunt sincerity may be useful to you :—converse with him when you can, and bear with his follies as charity demands : they can hurt no one..

“ What you thought of, with regard to trusting Lady Cottisbrooke, was judicious ; the rejection of your scheme still more so. She is not at all connected with me, but she is one to whose affection I could safely consign you. She is an exemplary woman, but not always able to distinguish her duties. She is wrong in urging the match between her son Hamilton and Harriet Assington ; for money is not happiness :—yet she thinks justly, that wedded poverty is

is misery, and I cannot blame her. You may trust the Assingtons, as much as you will find occasion to trust them ; but they will prove fair-weather friends, if you go too far.

“ I shall never flatter you, but I will always commend you when you deserve it : —with the same freedom I shall always animadvert. I found, with sorrow, that your senses were a little intoxicated with the follies and flatteries of the town—I see, with pleasure, your improvement in steadiness. While you retain your candor, you can never greatly err ; but remember, Perigrina Lamorne, that the situation you are in is not your own. I do not pretend to an investigation of your origin, but I have reason to believe there is some mystery in it : be it as it may, you can do yourself no harm by adapting your mind to hardship. I cannot conceive that the friendship of the family you are now in can last. The men love you—the women are jealous of

you. When the former feel disappointed, they will cool in their attachment, and leave you to your fate. But this will scarcely appease the female demons : your removal may follow. Keep yourself, therefore, armed for such a shock ; and, while you make your advantage of your present situation, be prepared in an instant to resign it. Still depend on the care of your

GOOD GENIUS."

The useful caution contained in this letter scarcely atoned to Peregrina for the misery she felt in being thus deprived, one by one, of the supports she had relied on in the kindness of her supposed friends ; and when, to divert the melancholy it had produced, she betook herself to her easel, and tried to give effect to Hebe's graceful hand, her thoughts reverted with a strong spring to her sad condition, and tears obscuring her sight, she sat down to weep, forgetful that she might be interrupted : and interrupted she was almost immediately by

by Sir Edward, whose impertinent inquisitiveness her recent admonition could hardly induce her to endure. He told her, in plain terms, that she was a fool for crying, let the cause be what it would, and pointed out some of the happiest and most thoughtless of those who frequented the house as more melancholy objects than herself. Then he broke out into a mournful apostrophe to his own fate; and when he grew rational, and the unison of his sorrow affected her, he began capering about the room, and went off.

When the first impressions this letter had made on her mind were a little blunted, her imagination could not confine itself to the small circle of intelligence her correspondent allowed her. She again busied herself in guessing at the author; but she was as far off as ever, and the hint relative to her having thought of Lady Cottisbrooke startled her. She bewildered herself anew, and gave the matter up in despair.

Mr.

Mr. Haccombe returned, and absence having raised his fondness into ardor, he sought a private audience of Peregrina at the first opportunity. After a thousand enquiries and effusions of joy, he revealed to her a *little project* he had formed for her advantage: this was no other than the making a settlement on her out of his own private fortune. The annual sum he urged her to accept was no less than five hundred pounds; and the only condition he annexed to it was, that she should not marry without his consent:—a restriction which entirely rendered her his slave, while it seemed to place her only in the light of a daughter.

But Peregrina was made cautious by the revelations of her secret monitor; and though Mr. Haccombe's generosity astonished, it could not influence her. With due expressions of gratitude, she declined the obligation; but it was in a way that left him at a loss to guess at her motive, and rather fearful she had too much sagacity.

His

His kindness, however, was not diminished, and, even when with his family, he seemed to have less command over his fondness than ever.

Whether it was this incaution which Lord Surchester had observed, or the increasing violence of his love that prompted it, did not appear ; but the next morning she had a letter from the earl, in which he explicitly offered her his hand. She could not hesitate a moment what answer she should return, for she had no idea of marriage without love, or of love without esteem ; but, having before talked on the subject of his lordship's attachment with Mr. Haccombe, she thought it proper that he should be made acquainted with this new offer. Her judgment told her she risqued nothing by this confidence : she therefore sent the note to him, and with it the answer she designed to return. It was an unmollified refusal ; and Mr. Haccombe hastened to her

her in person, to express his approbation and admiration.

In a less time than she had before waited, she received from Oxford a third letter, to this import :

“ I AM certain you may be trusted to your own prudence ; and from a cloud that hangs over your horoscope, I greatly fear you will need to exert the whole of it. Through this cloud, no aid of optics allows me to penetrate. I must therefore request you, if you can do it secretly, to write to me a full account of your situation, since Mr. Haccombe’s return ; and I shall be the better able to guide you.—I see a mysterious aspect, which you can doubtless explain.

“ Direct your letter to Ami Bonange, Post-office, Oxford.

“ Add

“ Add to the account I ask you, as much as you chuse to reveal of your own situation —particularly tell me whether any man is as yet honored with your love. It will be more for your benefit to be unreserved towards me, than to suffer me to discover, by my art, what I ask. I desire not to intrench on your prudence or your promises ; but what you are at liberty to reveal, reveal undoubting, to your

GOOD GENIUS.”

Peregrina was delighted with the opportunity offered her, of writing in return to these friendly letters. She considered her secret friend as indeed her tutelar deity, and referring all her actions to his or her approbation, she wished nothing concealed. But this partial knowledge again confounded her ; and, but for the date, she would have been persuaded it was some one very near her, to whom she was thus indebted.

She

She seized the first opportunity for writing; and, after expressing her strong sensations of gratitude for the protection she had experienced, she gave a succinct account of Mr. Haccombe's generous offer, and Lord Surchester's more dazzling proposal, and of the reception she had given to both. She then proceeded:

“ To reveal as much as I could, would be to forfeit your regard, by infringing on my promise. I can tell but little of my origin; but that little would offend, if revealed. I am therefore silent; and, conscious of the disadvantages I labor under, I submit in silence to a degraded state.

“ My heart is free—no one of worth has as yet laid claim to it; and now it behoves me to take good care of it. I am too poor to love.

“ What

“ What is designed me, I know not; but Mrs. H. and Mrs. B. are much clofeted together, and look with no benignity on me. I hear that Mr. H. is going into the north with Lord S. and that Mrs. H. then goes down to their country - house near Meopham in Kent. She expressed, with more than usual kindness, her wish for my accompanying her thither; and I, supposing you would chuse it, acquiesced.—I trust you have no view but that you avow —*my security*; for, believe me, should I find that you are endeavouring to make me distrust others, that I may be at last duped by you, I shall make use of all the sagacity you have taught me, against yourself.

“ Our time, while we remain in London, is portioned out into a variety of engagements. I hear of nothing farther.

“ I have thus, whosoever you are, obeyed you, in the sincerity of my heart, and with

with an earnest desire to do right. Whether I am justified in replying to you, or even in listening to you, I know not; but, for Heaven's sake, think how cruel it would be to deceive

The unsuspecting and inexperienced

P. L."

CHAP. VIII.

IN a few days, and before she had again heard from Oxford, Mr. Haccombe and the earl departed; and immediate preparations were made for removing to Bellevue-park. It seemed intended that the family should remain there some months: for the waggon was laden with the baggage, and Peregrina was directed to take with her all her clothes, &c. With some regret she quitted London and her masters for a new situation, where she felt as if she should be more entirely in the power of those she was with: but Mrs. Haccombe talked largely of pleasures to be enjoyed, and of visits to the sea coast; and in these she promised herself some gratification.

The three ladies travelled in the coach with four horses, postillions, outriders, &c. all *in style*: the coachman drove the house-keeper and the lady's maid in the phaëton: post-chaises, filled with the other servants, made up a grand retinue. Sir Edward went on horseback, attended by his own man. The party dined at Dartford, and reached Bellevue in the evening.

Whatever restrictions the contracted space allotted to dwellings in London had laid on oriental taste and profusion, were here abundantly atoned for; and Peregrina was again astonished and delighted at the grandeur of the apartments, which formed a climax of expence. Whatever in other less opulent mansions was *silvered*, was here *silver*: the furniture was composed of materials almost too delicate for personal wear: the most expensive china was in common use; the floors, the carpets, the hangings, the sashes, the cielings, the drawing

ing rooms, the chambers, the kitchens, could not be conveniently more expensive than they were made. Mirrors imported from France, chimney-pieces from Italy, and every treasure of the Indies, were here in lavish frequency; but Peregrina was astonished to see, in the large collection of pictures, not one that could be called good —and in the library, not a book that would move!

It was the occupation of her first morning to ramble about this immense building, which indeed, externally, could boast little more than its length of brick-work and the number of its windows. The housekeeper, swelling with the reflection of her master's wealth, shewed her the worked muslin hangings of the best bed, trimmed with lace, and the gilt dressing plate; and Peregrina thought herself deep in the Arabian Night's Entertainments.

This house had been raised from the ground by its present possessor, at an expence not far short of fourscore thousand pounds; and, without an heir to enjoy it after him, he had set his heart on its perfection, which it had not yet attained, nor was it at present prudent to continue his magnificent plans; for, deep as was his purse, he had found the means of shrinking it; and, notwithstanding his having discontinued play, he had perceived that, since he had returned to London from Bath, he had spent at a fearful rate. Mrs. Haccombe had *bad occasion* for large sums:—he was not in the habit of refusing; and his friend the earl had, to be sure, had as much as he could conveniently spare;—but the contract would make all good.

Mrs. Haccombe, extremely fatigued with the journey, and *sweet* Mrs. Barnby, *always anxious for her aunt's ease*, remained the greatest part of this day together, and without

out other company. Sir Edward came little in Peregrina's way ; and she, delighted with the beautiful garden and the circumjacent prospect, wished they might remain for ever in peace and quietness at Bellevue.

At supper, Mrs. Haccombe communicated the plan of pleasure for the next day. It was devoted to a dinner on board a ship then at Gravesend, and of which Captain Millis, a frequent visitor in Devonshire-place, and no small favorite with the lady of the house, was the commander. Mrs. Barnby represented the scheme as highly delightful ; and Peregrina was not disposed to depreciate it in idea. She heard there was to be a large party ; and she liked the novelty of such an entertainment.

“ Am I asked, mama ? ” said Sir Edward.

“ I wish you would leave off that foolish custom of calling me *mama* ! — No, you are not asked.”

“ But I shall go,” he muttered ; “ or I am sure you will all behave very ill.”

“ I had rather you would stay away, Sir.”

“ I believe so ; but I shall not humor you.”

At this period of the incipient squabble, a servant threw open the door, and announced Captain Courtland, who, covered with dust and very much fatigued, excused himself for his abrupt entrance, by saying he was on his road from Margate, where his mother was ; and, finding it too late to get on to town that night, he had come to beg a lodging.

Mrs. Haccombe, delighted even with the distant tinkle of nobility, gave him a most gracious reception, and insisted on his remaining with them the next day, and partaking their amusement : to which he made no objection. Sir Edward, with whom

whom he was, in town, on a footing of the closest intimacy, now chose not to bestow any notice on him, but, as if displeased with his entrance, withdrew early to rest ; and Peregrina, who thought the captain took more notice of her than the aunt and niece would approve, soon followed.

Mrs. Barnby, it is probable, did not think it prudent to give the young people much opportunity of conversation the next morning ; for she was uncommonly liberal of her company to Miss Lamorne, and scarcely lost sight of her for a moment till they went to dress. As they had a distance of eight miles to go, and were to dine at four o'clock, they set out earlier than their usual hour. The ladies were in the carriage, the gentlemen on horseback ; and with all the forms and accommodations used on such occasions, they were received by Captain Millis in the great cabin.

The party consisted of fourteen persons, three of whom were very genteel young women. After a very good dinner, some hints were dropped in conversation, which led Peregrina to believe that these young persons were going the ship's voyage. On enquiring of one of them, she learnt that they had embarked for Bombay, whither the vessel was bound, and that they went without an intention or wish of returning to their native country: their heads were full of men and money; and they had thought on the subject till they had lost all delicacy in talking of it.

Peregrina could not but recollect how nearly she had been in their situation; and this circumstance made her curious to learn how far her ideas of the business corresponded with the reality. These ladies were all nieces to the captain of the ship; and having from their infancy been accustomed to think of Bombay, and to long for eastern husbands, they were delighted with being

being thus far on their road to their wishes: they therefore described every circumstance as charming; but they could in no way qualify that one insuperable obstacle, that they must marry men they scarcely knew; and still Peregrina remained disgusted.

It was a serene evening, and the scene was uncommonly beautiful. Mrs. Haccombe talked of staying late, for the pleasure of being on the water by moonlight; and Miss Lamorne, very well pleased with her new acquaintances, gossiped with them apart. Sir Edward was upon deck, leaning over the side of the vessel in deep abstraction; and Captain Courtland, almost as vacant, sat at a distance, while Mrs. Haccombe and Mrs. Barnby flirted with the remaining gentlemen of the party, and were not two minutes in a place. Presently Sir Edward declared his intention of going home; Mrs. Haccombe seemed pleased, and tried to persuade Courtland to go with him; but he said he had thoughts of going

to town by water, leaving his horse at Bellevue till his return. This was not opposed. Mrs. Haccombe and Mrs. Barnby sauntered about and remained out of sight, till Peregrina began to think they had been long absent. She had just said to one of the young ladies that she would seek them, when Courtland entered the cabin with Captain Millis; and, as if continuing a conversation which had agitated him, said,

“ You are at liberty now, Sir, to put what questions you please to this lady.”

Peregrina, alarmed at this solemnity, asked hastily, “ Where is Mrs. Haccombe?”

“ She is gone,” replied Courtland with emotion.

“ Good heaven! gone? Where is Mrs. Barnby?”

“ Gone with her,” said Courtland.—“ But do not be alarmed, Madam; you are

are perfectly safe.—May I be permitted,” continued he, to the young ladies and Captain Millis, “ to speak in private with Miss Lamorne ?”

"On no account!" said Peregrina hastily but firmly. "I will not hear you, Captain Courtland."

"Stay, madam," interposed Millis: "let *me* ask you a few questions.—Is it not true, that you wish to get out of England, and go to Bombay?"

"By no means," she answered.

"But is it not your *wisest* plan to do so?"

"I do not understand you."

"Pray leave us for a few minutes," said Captain Millis to the four present.

Peregrina was too much astonished to oppose it. He shut the cabin-door, and taking her hand, said bluntly, but not in-

timidatingly, “ I am told by Mrs. Haccombe, young lady, that you are too great a favorite with her husband, and that you have not been quite so prudent as you should have been. She seems interested for you, and wishes your indiscretions should be forgotten, and this awkward attachment broken by a trip to the Indies, where I dare say your pretty person will soon make your fortune. It was therefore, as I have a great friendship for Mrs. Haccombe, settled between us that you should be left here in this way ; and I am sure nothing can have been better planned or executed. I would not have done so much for any one else ; but I had a very good character of you, in all but this point.—I assure you, I run some risque for your sake.”

“ You are either, Sir,” said Peregrina, undaunted and provoked, “ very wicked or very weak.—I desire Captain Courtland may come in.”

Courtland,

Courtland, who had not quitted the door, instantly entered.

She desired Captain Millis to repeat the calumny he had uttered.

She then asked Courtland, whether he could believe that Mrs. Haccombe had propagated such a report.

He replied in the affirmative; and Millis broke out into a laugh of sarcasm and triumph.

She believed the whole a conspiracy against her, and supposed Courtland deep in it.

He begged her to be calm, and to allow him a few words in private, without which it was impossible he could in any way serve her.

Millis, finding she was silent, withdrew; and Courtland, having seated her in a chair, began

began to speak in a manner that indicated very strong emotion ; while she, almost breathless, impatiently listened.

“ I have been employed,” said he, “ Madam, in a most extraordinary manner to serve you.—Read that letter,” continued he, taking a letter from his pocket-book.

“ Read it to me—I cannot see.”

He began :—“ Lose no time, Hamilton Courtland, in conjecturing who I may be, or what is my authority ; but instantly prepare, as a man of honor, a gentleman, and a soldier, to rescue one of the most amiable creatures in the world from one of hell’s blackest demons.—A word escaping you, renders the scheme abortive.

“ Haccombe’s wife is jealous of Peregrina Lamorne ; but it is on Surchester’s account. He is away ; and I have reason to believe it is a concerted plan, that this friendless

friendless angel shall be enticed, as to a party of pleasure, on Wednesday, on board Millis's ship at Gravesend. My skill deceives me, if she is not there to be left, to go the voyage to Bombay. Whether Millis is deceived, or aiding, I know not; but I charge you, unless you would be scouted on earth and in heaven, be at Haccombe's, at Bellevue, on Tuesday night: try to get to the speech of the dear girl; if you cannot, mingle in the banquet of the next day; and when she finds herself betrayed, step forward to her rescue. A few high words will frighten Millis: seize Peregrina; conduct her to your mother; but I charge you, Hamilton, as you value your soul, consign her to her care the spotless saint you find her. Regard her only as a distressed fellow creature. Be humane—be a man of honor; and applauding angels shall record thy virtue.

“ Failing of your purpose, hasten instantly to the India-house.—Spread an alarm
—fend

—send even an express to old Haccombe himself—raise heaven and earth ; but save Peregrina.

“ Prepare your mother to receive her — she will not betray us.”

Peregrina felt encouraged. She asked Courtland how he came by that letter. He said, he received it at Margate by the post.

She guessed it came from Oxford ; but keeping her thoughts secret, she begged to know how Captain Courtland meant to act.

“ Can you ask ? ” he replied.—“ Millis I suppose is duped, and he will be very willing to give you up. I have a letter from my mother to you. She waits at Northfleet for you, and will immediately, and most gladly, take you home.”

Lady

Lady Cottisbrooke's letter contained every consolation Peregrina could receive. She felt deeply the generosity of Hamilton, and was now only anxious to hear how Millis was disposed. It required some time, and some argument, to beat out of his salt-water head the idea Mrs. Haccombe had at first set afloat in it, and he would for near half an hour accede no farther than to a reference to his employer herself. But Hamilton would hear of nothing that should detain Peregrina. He talked fiercely and familiarly of his friends *in the Direction*; and Millis at length saw, for he knew Courtland's rank and connexions, that a peaceable acquiescence was his wisest part, though from his reluctance it was fairly to be inferred, that he expected to have been well paid for his trouble in conducting the young lady to Bombay.

The contest ended, Peregrina, worn to extremity with the agitation and terror she had

had undergone, hastened Hamilton to depart. "Stay," said Millis: "if you are to go, you may as well take all your rubbish with you." He then called some of his men, and gave orders for the boat and for Miss Lamorne's trunks, which, to her great surprise, the provident care of Mrs. Hacombe had contrived should be brought on board after her.

of man, and yet I believe that all the
effort, the pains, the trouble, the time, the
and **CHAP.**

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THEY were soon on shore, and Courtland procuring a post-chaise, while Peregrina took out of her trunks the little she wanted, that the rest might come by sea to her at Margate, they set off together for the Queen's Head at Northfleet, which in less than half an hour they reached ; and there found Lady Cottisbrooke alone, waiting in the greatest anxiety. She received Peregrina as she would have done a daughter. They spent the night where they were ; and, setting off the next morning in her ladyship's carriage for Margate, they reached her house early in the evening. Lady Almerina Delaford either would not, or could not, disguise her vexation at Lady Cottisbrooke's returning too late to dress for the ball at the rooms. Lady Essex asked

asked a thousand foolish questions; and Peregrina was glad to escape, under pretence of fatigue.

Lady Cottisbrooke seized the first opportunity of speaking alone to Peregrina: She expressed, in the kindest terms, the interest she felt for her, and congratulated herself that an accident, by which Miss Lamorne had not essentially suffered, and which must serve to convince her how improper a protectress Mrs. Haccombe was, had put it in her power to offer her an abode in her house, as long as she could make it agreeable to her. Lady Cottisbrooke told her she had had an eye to some inevitable necessity of a breach, ever since the appearance of the calumnious paragraphs in the public papers, and explained so fully their veiled meaning, that Peregrina could not but be anxious lest she too should have suffered in her reputation. Her ladyship quieted her fears on this head, and assured her that her quitting thus abruptly the family she had been

been with, would be the severest censure that could be passed on them ; and that should Mr. Haccombe, whose *penchant* for her was more than suspected by the world, resent his wife's conduct, and again offer her his protection and friendship, she would oppose his wish with all the authority Miss Lamorne would entrust her with.

In the regard of such a woman as Lady Cottisbrooke, Peregrina saw advantages, though less glittering, far more valuable than any Devonshire-place had afforded her, or Bellevue promised her ; and she gladly accepted the condescending affection offered her.

It was her intention, at her first leisure, to write again to Oxford ; but she was anticipated, the morning after her arrival, by a letter dated from thence, and containing these words :

“ YOUR

“ YOUR candid answer, my Peregrina, was every thing I could wish, and has convinced me my care for you is well bestowed and accepted. Do not for a moment entertain an unjust suspicion. I would sacrifice myself, ere I would injure you. It has been my good fortune once to rescue you—it shall be my future study to preserve you.

“ You have escaped from a set of people, the depravity of whose hearts you cannot yet know; but a short time may develope it.

“ To my certain knowledge, that eastern sensualist Haccombe had no view in his kindness to you, but the adding you to his seraglio; and finding your principles such as would not admit of an immediate connexion, I am persuaded he encouraged that bankrupt lord’s assiduities to his wife, in hopes of obtaining a divorce, and setting you in her place.

“ Mrs.

“ Mrs. Haccombe and her niece were overheard plotting the scheme of leaving you with Captain Millis.

“ But the most extraordinary matter, and that from which you had the most to apprehend, is this:—An application was made a short time ago to Mr. Haccombe, by a person of rather a good appearance, but of intellects and education so entirely Irish, that his meaning was scarcely intelligible. He enquired if there was not in the family a young miss, about seventeen or eighteen years of age, with brown hair, a very pretty mouth and hands, and who was *very much grown since he last saw her*. Subjoined to this odd enquiry, was an intimation that if the conduct of the *young miss* in question had been respectable, she would soon be claimed by some friends *who knew nothing of her*.

“ As your guardian, I took every possible method to obtain an interview with this

Hibernian, but it was out of my power; I could only procure a sight of Haccombe's reply, of which I send you a copy.

‘ SIR,

‘ IN answer to your's, which met
 ‘ me on my return to town, I have only to
 ‘ say, that, if by the person you enquire
 ‘ after, you mean Miss Lamorne, she is un-
 ‘ der my protection, and needs not the at-
 ‘ tention of any other friend. I have reason
 ‘ to believe her perfectly contented with
 ‘ her situation in my house, and with my
 ‘ attachment to her. I mean to make a
 ‘ permanent settlement on her, to secure
 ‘ her against any accident to me, and am,
 ‘ Sir,

‘ Your most faithful and most
 ‘ obedient humble servant,

‘ ISAAC HACCOMBE.’

“ This letter was directed to *Mr. Geoghegan*: perhaps he may be of your acquaintance.

ance. Use your discretion, as to the steps you shall take in consequence of it.

“ You are now, I trust, in safety ; but still, admit no one to your confidence.—Write to me freely ; for you will never repent disclosing such a heart as yours to your

GOOD GENIUS.

“ P. S. To be nearer you, I have removed to Canterbury. Direct, as before, to the Post-office there.”

The contents of this letter were more astonishing than those of the preceding ; and Peregrina, while she was thankful for the invisible protection she enjoyed, was yet very much hurt to find that it had not been in the power of her *good genius* to hinder so gross a calumny, as Mr. Hacombe’s billet contained, from reaching its destination. She was not long at a loss to recollect who it was that had made the

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application. She remembered her old friend Dennis, Mr. Byram's servant : she knew, that though he had been discharged with the other supernumerary domestics, Lady Jemima had entertained thoughts of hiring him to accompany her to England, if she resolved on that measure ; and she flattered herself that her ladyship had taken up good resolutions in her favour, that what she had heard against her was as false as the aspersions of herself, and that her regard wanted only a proof of her desert.

On this supposition therefore, she wrote immediately to Canterbury, requesting her *good genius* if possible, to procure her such intelligence of Lady Jemima Byram as might enable her to undeceive her.

To this she had an immediate reply, deterring her from making any application to Lady Jemima, who was represented as beneath her regard, and utterly unlikely to have made the enquiry. But her *incognito* friend

friend comforted her by saying he had caused one of his or her ministers to write at the bottom of Mr. Haccombe's reply, a positive contradiction of the insinuation it contained, and a request for an interview, to which he had received no answer.

Peregrina was forced to give up whatever hopes she had conceived from this circumstance, and to rest contented under the voluntary protection offered her. She had become so accustomed to the correspondence of *Ami Bonange*, that she was no longer curious to know whom the designation meant ; and where she now was placed, she had a. bundance of comforts to be grateful for.

Lady Cottisbrooke had, as soon as Pebrugina recovered from the alarm of her removal, given her to understand that she received her on the terms of a visitor, and that, as her eldest son and Lady Almerina Delaford would probably in the ensuing winter marry, and quit her, she looked for-

ward with pleasure to the addition Miss Lamorne's company would be in their family society. She hinted at Lady Essex's *weak state of health*, by which she meant the *weakness of her faculties*, though her maternal delicacy made her find a periphrasis for the calamity ; and suggesting, with a sigh, that when Hamilton Courtland and Harriet Assington were united, she should want some one to supply the place of her children, she complimented her young friend so far as to say she should feel great comfort in meriting her affection.

“ I have no right, dearest Madam,” replied Peregrina, with the tears glistening on her eye-lashes, “ to such tendernels : I am thrown on the world ; and I ought rather to seek a livelihood than to avail myself of your goodness. If your Ladyship could find me a situation in your family where I had some duty to discharge, I should feel still happier. It very ill becomes me to live in idleness.”

She

She burst into tears as she pronounced these words, recollecting what had been her hard fate. Lady Cottisbrooke, with great compassion tried to cheer her ; and that her feelings might not be hurt by a weight of obligation, she proposed to her that she should endeavour to make Lady Essex apply to some accomplishments she was deficient in. Her Ladyship concluded what she proposed, by saying that she would always have Miss Lamorne considered as her sister, and that if she availed herself of her talents, it was only in consideration to her amiable delicacy.—No stipend was therefore to be thought on ; but Lady Cottisbrooke's kind expressions left no room to doubt her generosity.

Lady Almerina Delaford's pride was now the only perceptible impediment to Peregrina's ease ; but as this shewed itself chiefly in contempt, and was sure to meet Lady Cottisbrooke's reprobation, it gave her little uneasiness. Hamilton Courtland went

to join his regiment in a few days after Peregrina became his mother's guest. The Miss Assingtons were expected down early in July, to pay a visit of a few weeks to Lady Cottisbrooke; and nothing occurred to disturb Peregrina, except a rumour that Sir Edward Bergholt had idled himself down to Margate. She was not without suspicion that he was made a spy for the Haccomes, who, she doubted not, were informed before this time of her escape, by many of their acquaintances she had met at Margate; and her fears were confirmed, when a very few mornings after, he appeared at the door, and enquired for her. She begged Lady Cottisbrooke to be with her during this visit; and thus supported, she met him with tolerable courage. He was more *distracted* than ever she had seen him, but without any mixture of nonsense: he was gloomy and uncollected, and seemed choaking with some mental agitation. He wanted much to get Peregrina from Lady Cottisbrooke, and every assurance

Ani
Bonange

Bonange had given her of his innoxiousness, gave way to strong suspicion, when, finding her resolute in refusing him a private audience, he gave her a letter from Mr. Haccombe, to which he requested an answer: it was a most tender, pathetic, elegiac complaint of her absence, and a most earnest, supplicating, amorous importunity of her to return:—there was no allusion to the true cause of her removal; he seemed to think it choice, and still more erroneously, that it was in his power to recall her.—She would write no answer.—She put the letter into Lady Cottisbrooke's hand, and told Sir Edward, she supposed him acquainted with the nature of his embassy: she hoped he was ignorant of what had occasioned it; but that whether he understood it or not, it was sufficient if she desired him to say for her to Mr. Haccombe that it did not suit her ever to return to his house.—Sir Edward got up, and turning towards the window, and leaping across the room, without wait-

ing a reply, he mounted his horse, and set off again, pensive.

Lady Cottisbrooke seemed to consider this as only an ebullition of his frenzy, and was affected by it. "I knew Edward," said she, "a very different being, and the most promising young man in the world."

"I have often pitied him," said Peregrina; "but I think Mr. Haccombe makes a shameful use of his weakness."

"It seems so. I am sorry to see him look so very ill—it makes me fear his health will not aid his recovery."

"He looks indeed sadly—much worse than when I first knew him."

"Ah, Miss Lamorne! had you known him before that terrible fever that deranged him, you would feel deeply for him now: he had, I think, the most gentlemanly person,

person, and manners, of any man I ever saw: not excepting even my dear boy Ham; and I am very partial to *him*."

" Sir Edward's countenance is still very fine; and when he is tolerably well, the expression of it is very interesting."

" Oh, nothing to what I remember it—and he grows thinner every day. I really believe he is very ill-treated by the Hac-comes: they wish to have it expected that he will recover; but I see no chance of it; and I am persuaded, it is only because Mr. Haccombe finds the management of his estate profitable, and fears the interpo-sition of the court of chancery, if Edward is once declared lunatic."

" He is very rational sometimes."

" So are most people in that melancholy way. I used to suspect that they would make a match for him with that artful wo-

nian, Mrs. Barnby; but I suppose that is given up." Peregrina, true to her word to Mrs. Barnby, was silent. "There was a time," added Lady Cottisbrooke, with a sigh, "when I used to think Edward Berg-holt and my Essex might have come together, but—"

She sighed deeply, and Peregrina turned the conversation to Mr. Haccombe's letter.

CHAP. X.

UNDER the protecting shade of a friendship that sedulously kept off from her every annoyance, Peregrina seemed at length fixed in peace and comfort. Lady Cottisbrooke, it must be confessed, was not without a hope of reward in what she did for her ; but it was a hope so sanctified by its aims, that it became highly laudable. It terminated solely in Lady Essex Courtland's advantage ; and with rapture she fancied she saw her daily improve under Miss Lamorne's tuition : she retained more on her memory ; she had left off several of her childish habits ; she had more curiosity ; in short, she promised much better than heretofore.

Thus assisting and assisted, thus pleasing and pleased, we may safely trust Peregrina to Lady Cottisbrooke's care, and see what is become of the too-long neglected Lady Jemima Byram, who, after the departure of the Haccombes, and the more melancholy desertion of Lord Surchester, remained at Bath in an inextricable labyrinth of difficulties, which her defeated plans of liberation tended only to increase.

As soon as she could recover herself after this cruel blow, and could look forward to her situation, if the earl should have absolutely relinquished her, she wrote to him in those terms that must inevitably, if he had any aversion to a scold, send him still farther out of her reach. When it was her interest to *persuade*, she *threatened*; and, though all depended on a return of his passion, she used no conciliating words. She reminded him of the written promise of marriage he had given her; and she averred, by every thing sacred, her resolution to enforce

force it to the utmost extent of the law.—
His lordship was not tardy in his reply : he
wrote,

“ My dearest life !

“ BEWARE, for your own
sake, how you expose yourself, by produc-
ing to the world the nugatory bond you sold
your fame for. A score of dames could
rival you ; for I keep the form ready written,
to distribute as I see occasion ; but I confess
I have always found it a sufficient plea to
declare under my hand, as I do now to
you, my dear lady, that I am, and have
been for upwards of fifteen years, a married
man ; and that I shall continue, to my life’s
end,

Your ladyship’s most grateful,
most faithful humble servant,

SURCHESTER.

“ P. S. My wife lodged, when I last
heard of her, in one of the *wynds* near the
Cowgate, Edinburgh ; and, I dare say,
would answer any questions.”

Neither her spirits nor her strength could endure the mockery of this insult ; and, having on paper given vent to the overflowings of her passion, she took to her bed with a violent fever.

Her journey, and the necessity of paying a year's board, &c. in advance, to procure Miss Arabella's admission into the school she was placed at ; the figure she had thought it necessary to support at Bath, and the consequent expences of play, &c. that it led her into, joined to her natural want of oeconomy, had very much diminished the small sum she had secured for herself ; and, when her life was out of danger, she found her condition reduced nearly to that of want. Without spirits to concert new plans, and almost sickened of the world, now she had its hardships in view, she gave herself up to grief, and might have become an object of pity, even to those who best knew her failings. She repented most sincerely her conduct

conduct towards Sir Clifford Byram, which had excluded her from every claim on him : she dreaded applying to her brother, knowing the cruel imposition by which she had injured him ; and, still retaining one spark of nature in her breast, she was fearful of hazarding her eldest daughter's certainty of a provision in that quarter.

In this dilemma she remained, unable to bow her mind to her miseries, till she was compelled to pay for her lodgings by a promissory note, to take up goods on credit, and at length to borrow ten guineas at a card table, whither, in a state of dreadful emaciation, she had been wheeled, that by some desperate chance she might retrieve her circumstances ; but the event deciding against her, she was compelled to think of some means by which she might subsist ; and, her objection to supplicating Lord Armathwaite being supported by *two* considerations, she preferred the only alternative she had, and in terms of the most abject humility,

humility, such as she thought would shame him into pity, she conjured Sir Clifford to save his son's widow from perishing for want.

The old man, still retaining in his nature all those dispositions which prompted him rather to deplore than to resent the injuries he received, had retired, rich and unhappy, to his seat in Northamptonshire, where, brooding over the calamities which had cut off his race before his eyes were closed, he referred all to his own impetuous zeal for Lambert's aggrandisement, and hated himself more than Lady Jemima. But his attorney, Laster, whose interest it was to keep all his relations aloof, never suffered his resentment entirely to expire, and could talk the venerable penitent into a rage, which dissolved away in yearnings of tenderness, as soon as he was left to the softness of his own nature.

It

It was Sir Clifford who had taken Dennis Geoghegan into his service, and the faithful fellow would often have pleaded for *Miss Elizabeth*, had he not been prohibited, under pain of an immediate discharge, the mention of any one of Mr. Byram's family. But he had penetration enough to perceive that his master dared not trust his own heart for its firmness ; and hoping that, at some favorable moment or other, he might succeed, he endeavoured to furnish himself with documents respecting her situation ; and having traced her to Devonshire place, through the means of Captain S—, who had brought her over from Dublin, he had been at the pains of a journey to town, and it was he who had so awkwardly, in the ill-sustained character of a gentleman, applied for a certificate of her good behaviour.

Unable to comprehend the postscript which Ami Bonange, whoever that personage might be, had added to contradict
Mr.

Mr. Haccombe's intimations, he put the letter in his pocket, and the time he had asked for his journey to London having been considerably diminished by its pleasures, and his finances by its multifarious allurements, he was forced to take the first and cheapest conveyance he could find for his return. This happening to be the roof of a stage-coach, where he found two of his countrymen, they all got drunk by the way, and Dennis's pocket was picked of the very little money he had left, and of all the fruit of his expedition ; for he lost Mr. Haccombe's letter, and returned home in a state of riotous intoxication, that unfortunately happened first to offend, by opprobrious language, the dignity of the great Mr. Lassiter, who instantly brought him by the collar into the presence of his master, that he might improve the best opportunity he might ever have, of separating from Sir Clifford a domestic whose fidelity was an obstacle and a terror to himself.

Poor

Poor Dennis was dismissed his master's service while in a state that kept him ignorant of his misfortune. In the deepest woe he went the next morning to the clergyman of the parish, to beg his intercession. He procured it; but Sir Clifford remembered him in his drunkenness, and Laffiter took care he should think of nothing favorable to the honest fellow.

The parson, whose good nature was hurt at Dennis's wailings for the loss of his place, and who had had frequent opportunities of remarking his attachment to Sir Clifford, gave up unwillingly his hope of reinstating him; but, having exerted ineffectually his utmost endeavours, he was compelled, by his fears of uselessly displeasing Sir Clifford, to give up the point, and advise Dennis to seek another service, and keep himself more sober.

“ Dear sir,” answered Dennis to this friendly admonition, “ since I must not
serve

serve my dear kind hard-hearted master, would you have the goodness to please to let me be your servant? and thus, you see, if I am not near my dear master, I shall be close by him."

" No, no, Dennis :—you know I keep no servant but a cow-boy and a carter."

" Never mind, sir !—Let me be cow-boy !—I will come for just almost nothing ; for what can I do ? I have spent more money than I had, in going up to that same London, to seek a pretty little girl of my acquaintance that is a stranger to me ; and I am here in a foreign country out of the king's dominions, and away from my own dear country and all my good friends, who could, as you may say, assist me ; and I know they can do nothing for me, because I was always obliged to do for them.—Devil fetch them all, for letting me be a poor servant !"

The clergyman was moved ; and hoping that, at some future time, Sir Clifford might relent, he promised to retain Dennis, on condition his former master did not resent his interference, till he could provide himself with a place better suited to his more usually elevated notions.

On application, Sir Clifford granted the requisite permission, and declaring that he had no other enmity towards Dennis than his desire for peace (the only blessing he could now enjoy) obliged him to entertain, he authorized his friend the vicar to receive him, and pay him, on *his* account, his usual stipend, promising at the end of a year, if he behaved well, to admit him again into his family.—The contract stood, notwithstanding Mr. Lassiter's many representations against it ; and poor Dennis was sober, hopeful, and happy.

It was nearly at the time of this event that Lady Jemima's submissive letter, for want
of

of Lassiter's knowing her hand-writing, reached Sir Clifford. The old man could not forget her ill conduct; and, on shewing his prime agent her petition, he was fully reminded of all her faults: but no malignity or argument could induce him to add to his poignant regrets those of conscious inhumanity. He sent her the immediate relief of one hundred pounds, with a promise of twice that sum annually, if she would consent to retire into Wales, and give him no future disturbance.

While waiting the return of the post, her ladyship had made an acquaintance with a young heir, of whom she had, in a fortunate evening, won upwards of four hundred pounds; and she almost repented the confessions she had made. But the young pigeon having been warned off the stage, and her demands increasing daily, by the time Sir Clifford's donation arrived she was again hopeless, and in a disposition to accept it.—Under pretence of benefiting by change

change of air, she negotiated for a small house at Swansea; and in polite, if not sincere terms of acknowledgment, she professed herself ready to adopt Sir Clifford's proposed plan of oeconomy; and having honorably paid her debts, she removed, with as little delay as possible, to her new abode, freed, by her imposition on Lord Armathwaite, and by her advanced disbursements for her youngest daughter's maintenance, of all present care beyond herself.

CHAP. X.

The situation Lady Jemima had gained, despicable as she thought it, and stubbornly as she bowed to it, was felicitous, compared to that in which she had, by a fraud not to be forgiven, placed Lord Armathwaite, Joanna, and, by consequence, her sympathising friend Mrs. Halnaby. A very few hours acquaintance, with his travelling companion, had made his Lordship apprehend, that in presenting to Joanna a daughter, he should fix a new thorn in the wounded bosom of her he was most anxious to serve ; and the event proved his conjecture right ; for though he forbore relating any one of those circumstances that could best assist in forming an opinion of Miss Byram, Joanna, in the first quarter of an hour, perceived that all the airy hopes she had

had cherished of being repaid for the sufferings of many, many years, by the virtues and filial affection of her daughter. In truth, Joanna had, like most of the world, formed her hopes too much on her wishes: she had figured to her imagination, while she waited Lord Armathwaite's return, the delight of clasping to her bosom a creature all loveliness, and of finding, in this one tie to society, all the cruelties of the world atoned for. In her conversations with Mrs. Halnaby, which were incessantly on the subject of her expectations, she always talked and planned, on the supposition of Elizabeth's perfect excellence; and however respectfully she received her more experienced friend's cautions against being too sanguine, she could not admit an idea of her fancy's erring.

How her daughter had been educated was a doubt with her; but she thought herself happy in recovering her at an age when she was still capable of instruction; and as

Lord Armathwaite had, immediately after his conference with his sister, written to Joanna the favorable account of the young lady's disposition which Lady Jemima had imposed on him, docility was not to be questioned. The too ardent parent supposed some *finishing* might be necessary to fit her for the circle she wished her to move in; this was the most she could allow; and she was not without hope, that Lady Jemima's care, which she contemplated with the utmost gratitude, might have superseded even this necessity.

Expecting, therefore, to see beauty, elegance, and virtue, even in the external of her daughter, and reckoning on her being, as in her babyhood she promised, extremely like Mr. Byram, she saw Lord Armathwaite's *avant courier* gallop up to the door, and his chaise, which had been one stage to meet him, following at full speed, with all the extacy of hope waiting its consummation. She could not remain where

she was to receive this darling of her heart: she flew to the chaise-side, and her eyes passing Lord Armathwaite too quickly to observe the expression of his features, she fixed them on his companion, of whom, however, in that situation, she could form no judgment.

Insensible to all but her child's return, she gave involuntarily one hand to Lord Armathwaite as he snatched it in alighting, and the other, in speechless agitation, she extended to Miss Byram, who, seemingly, attentive to nothing but her safe passage to the ground, obliged her to peep under her bonnet that she might see her face.

Joanna saw, and was delighted with her strong resemblance to her father; it was, indeed, as satisfactory a likeness as could be desired to ascertain a pedigree; but it was what a very faithful picture may be, a very bad copy. She had Byram's lineaments, with Lady Jemima's physiognomy;

and the temper of her mind operating on her countenance, had she had the beauty of the Medicean Venus, she must have wanted every charm the human countenance boasts: but against this discovery the fond mother's favorable prejudice was a sufficient blind for the moment.

She was not so tall as Joanna had imaged her in her own idea; but this was of little consequence; she walked imperfectly as she entered the house; but perhaps she was cramped with the journey: she neither spoke nor shewed any sign of pleasure; but this was owing to her fatigue. On entering a parlor, Joanna, bursting into tears, threw her arms round her neck, which expression of fondness Miss received with the gentle rebuke—"You'll tumble my hair, Ma'am"—and indeed, it would have been a pity to discompose the young lady's locks, which she had, at the last stage, powdered most furiously.

Joanna,

Joanna, impatient to present her to the sight of Mrs. Halnaby, who knew her only by report, and had purposely kept away, that she might be no restraint, begged Miss Byram to take off her cloak, and go with her to the next room. The young lady shewed her good manners by immediately obeying, and discovered, to Joanna's infinite disappointment, a pair of shoulders of such inequality, as annihilated all hope of personal elegance. She then set forward, on a brisk waddle, to be introduced to Mrs. Halnaby, and shewed at once what was the grace of her external.

Joanna was hurt ; but no farther than as what she had seen, confined her hopes to that she could not as yet judge of. She had not as yet heard Miss Byram say any thing decisive of her pretensions ; and a few moments more of observation would have made her fearful of receiving this farther satisfaction, lest with it another portion of her sanguine expectations should have withered.

Mrs. Halnaby saw Joanna's agitated mind on her quivering lips, and without waiting the formality of an introduction, she received the stranger as she would have welcomed a grand daughter, while Miss, with a hand extended to each of the fond claimants, stared round the apartment in vacant abstraction, and in her deepest tones muttered, “*Thith itb not tho fine a bouth atb my mama'th—am I to live here?*”—Joanna let fall the hand she had held, and Mrs. Halnaby, with a look that inquired how her friend bore her disappointment, desired the young lady to be seated.

“*It wath very cold travelling,*” says Miss: “I thought it a long way.”

“Yes, my dear,” replied Joanna,” stiffling her feeling, “I was fearful you might suffer in the journey; but I was impatient to see you. Are you not glad, Elizabeth, to see your own mother?”

“Why

“ Why it *is* my mother that *is* in Dublin; I have no other mother.”

“ No, my love, Lady Jemima has been so kind as to educate you for me; but I am your mother, and you shall ever find me truly such.”

“ I like my own mama *best*; but I can *stay* here a little while.”

“ Yes, my love, you must stay with me — I hope I shall win your love in time.”

Lord Armathwaite, who had shunned the first interview, perhaps fearful of what it must be, then entered ; and Joanna went out of the room with him, to express her cruel disappointment. He owned the young lady not very promising, but repeated the good character he had received her with, and gave Joanna hopes that all, or, at least, much, might be rectified by a correction of her education ; but in pro-

portion as Joanna had been confiding, she was dejected, and nothing could now persuade her that her daughter was a being capable of improvement.

“ Suspend your judgment a little,” said Lord Armathwaite; “ let us first find out her deficiencies; and it will be a pleasure to supply them.”

They went together into the room where Mrs. Halnaby and Miss Byram were sitting; and the first words that greeted Joanna’s ears, were an address from the newly-arrived stranger to her companion, on the subject of her work, which unfortunately happening to be *knitting*, offended Miss Byram’s notions of elegance.

“ What do you do *such* vulgar work for? I would take you for a poor woman.”

“ I do it, my dear, because my eyes will not enable me to do fine works; and it is very useful.”

“ *Useful!*

“ *Utheful!*—how can it be *utheful?* What, can’t you afford to buy *thtockingth?* My mama *alwayth wearth thilk.*”

“ They are useful to the poor, to whom I give them.”

“ What, give *’um* away to poor people? I am *thure* if I did *’um* I *thould* keep *’um* for *mythelf.*”

Joanna could scarcely contain herself; “ Gracious God!” she exclaimed, “ how am I punished for my presumption!”—She checked herself; and it being about two o’clock, on the supposition that Miss Byram might stand in need of refreshment, a side-table was laid for her.

The footman who had placed it, came up to Mrs. Byram, and said that Mrs. Lewis wished very much that she might be allowed to see Miss.

"I will ring for her in a minute," replied Joanna. Then addressing herself to the young lady, she said, "My dear, the servant who nursed you in your infancy is eager to see you. Will you go out to her? or shall she come hither to you?"

"I don't want to *thee* her," said Miss.

"O but you must;—it would be unkind to refuse her this pleasure.—She is an excellent creature, I assure you, and has almost broke her heart for the loss of you." Joanna then rang the bell, and poor Nelly, now some years older, and elevated to the rank of housekeeper, with tears of joy burst into the room; but Miss Byram's look was sufficient to bring her to her recollection; and having expressed her joy, and hoped she was well after her journey, she retired mortified.

"Who *is* that?" asks Miss.

"It

“ It is my housekeeper,” said Mrs. Halnaby rather stiffly.

“ *Houthkeeper?*” re-echoed the young lady ; “ why our *houthmaids* at home are *thmarter*.”

“ I do not love smart servants, said her mistress.”

“ No, *becaутh* you are old ; but my mama *bath* all *thmart thervantb*.”

“ Your mama, as you call her, my dear, is a lady of fashion.”

“ And ar’nt you ?”

“ No, my dear, I am a plain elderly gentlewoman.”

“ *Yeth*, I *thee* that ; but you are rich.

“ Moderately so.”

“ And a’nt that other lady a lady of fathion? *The ith a real lady, my mama told me.*”

“ Have you ever been in England before?” said Joanna, wishing to change the discourse.

“ But I *thay*,” resumed Miss Byram, peevish at not being answered, “ you live in *thyle*, don’t you? — you don’t *thay* at *thith* dull *plaith* all the *fathionable* part of the year, do you? — for that I *thall* not like.”

“ Have you ever been in London?” said Mrs. Halnaby.

“ O yetb, often; and in Dublin I *al-waith uith* to be of all my mama’th *partieth*. — I like *partieth*.”

“ But you have not begun yet to play cards, I suppose,” said Mrs. Halnaby.

“ O yetb,

“ O yeth, I have ;—my mama had my governeth to teach *uth*.”

“ Where are the Miss Byrams now ?” said Joanna, in a melancholy tone.

“ *Mith Byramth* ?—there *ith* but one *Mith Byram bethide* me, and that *ith* my *thithter Arabella*.”

“ I recollect now,” said Joanna, “ you know of no other ; but where is Miss Arabella ?—I am afraid you were very much grieved at leaving her.”

“ Not I indeed ;—I don’t care for Arabella.”

“ You see,” said Lord Armathwaite, the instinctive prevalence of nature : she felt, I dare say, no love for Arabella.

“ But she seems partial to Lady Jemima,” said Joanna to him, in a low tone.

“ Yes,

“ Yes, I suppose she was won by her kindness; and that, I think, is a good sign.”

“ Did you know the other young person that was in Mr. Byram’s family?” said Joanna to her; “ I suppose you hardly called her sister.”

“ What? do you mean *Elizabeth*? *Thee* *wath* a *batbtard*, and I hate her;—my mama bid me hate her.”

“ What for?” said Joanna, more frightened than ever.

“ Why *becauht* *thee* *wath* a *batbtard*—and *thee* *wath* the most *thpiteful* *desheitful* creature in the world.”

“ How do you know it?” said Lord Armathwaite; “ she did not live with you.”

“ No; but my mama told me *thee* *wath* *alwaith* *thetting* my papa *againtht* *utb*, and *thee* *thpent* all my papa’th money.

“ This

“ This is strange,” said Mrs. Halnaby.

The traveller’s little table was spread, and a cold boiled fowl and an apple tart waited her attention. Mrs. Halnaby inviting her to eat, she replied that she did not love boiled chicken, she liked it *roastbed*.

“ I am sorry for it,” Mrs. Halnaby answered; “ I happen to have no other in the house—perhaps you will like the tart better.”

“ If it *is* apple, I don’t like it;—I like *damson* better.”

“ How unfortunate we are,” said Mrs. Halnaby, “ not to suit your palate!”

Many things were then proposed for the young lady’s eating; but though she declared herself hungry, no one met her approbation. At last some preserved fruits were successful; she would have some sweet wine,

wine, which she observed on, as being brought on a salver not so *banthome* as her *mama'th*; and she then bethought herself of her dress, and asked who *wath* to wait on her.

The office of attending on Miss Byram, whenever she should arrive, had been be-spoken by Joanna's Eleanor, who impatiently waited for the pleasure of asking her ten thousand questions: she was now called; but as her new mistress rose to leave the room, Mrs. Byram observing something hung about her neck, in hopes it might be a miniature of Lambert which she had been thus careful to trust only to her own person, stopped her to look at it, but nothing more than the suspending chain being in sight, she was obliged to ask permission, which Miss point blank refused, by saying nobody *should thee* what it *wath*.

Mrs. Byram, in gentle terms, begged to be indulged.

“ What ?

“ What? won’t you be angry at it?” Miss asked, with a look, that in one of lower life would have passed for an impudent grin.

“ No, on my word,” said Joanna, keeping hold on the chain.

Um! “ I thought you would,” said Miss, as she shrunk herself in to give the medallion liberty.

Mrs. Byram was thunderstruck when she saw on one side an agnus, and on the other, a head of the Virgin Mary.—“ Good God! Elizabeth,” she exclaimed, “ are you a papist ?”

“ I *thaid* you would be angry,” replied Miss Byram; “ but I wore it to keep me *thafe* in the journey.”

“ And have you any faith in its power ?” interposed Lord Armathwaite, desirous a little to spare Joanna’s feelings.

“ My

" My governeth told me it would keep me *safe*," she replied.

" What? had you a roman catholic governess?" Mrs. Halnaby asked.

" Yetb," she replied---" the governeth we had before, had a little *crim. con.* with the butler, tho my mama *wath* obliged to get *somebody* in a hurry."

" *Crim. con.!*" repeated Mrs. Halnaby; " do you know, Miss Byram, what you are talking about?"

" O yetb," she answered laughingly; my *latbt* governeth *utbed* to *thay* what a pity it *wath* that other *wath* not a Catholic, *becaugh* then *thee* might have got *abtholubtion*, and nobody could have hurt her.

" For heaven's sake, go and dress," said the half-distracted Joanna.

" What

“What, am I a figure?” says Miss, as she went out of the room, not at all aware of Mrs. Byram’s meaning.

Joanna’s grief was not to be restrained any longer than till the cause of it was out of hearing; nor was it in the power of Lord Armathwaite or Mrs. Halnaby to offer her any other consolation than a hope that a new mode of treatment might retrieve the unfortunate girl.

“ But,” said Joanna, “ what ground is there for hope? She has not only shewn her total want of every external recommendation, but she has no heart—she has no morality.”

“ Let us, however, wait a few days,” said the Earl, “ and see whether these deficiencies, which perhaps are more in appearance than in reality, may not be in some way supplied.”

“ They

“ They can *never* be supplied,” answered Joanna emphatically. “ The girl, who at seventeen has no heart, is very little likely to find one.—Good God! what will my future life be?”

“ *Happy* it would be, could *I* make it so,” said Lord Armathwaite.

“ Of that I am convinced,” said Joanna; “ but this is a misfortune we could not expect.”

“ Let us share it together, and it will be lessened,” he replied.

“ You have my promise,” she answered, “ and in truth and honor I am bound to fulfil it. I cannot say you have not found and restored to me my daughter—you could not make her other than she is. I owe you every thing; you have from my infancy had my heart, and broken as it is, it is still your’s.”

“ And

“ And with that certainty,” answered his Lordship, “ will I rest contented, till I see your peace in some degree restored.”

“ You will oblige me by doing so,” she replied; “ for at present I can think only of this untoward girl.”

Dinner had not waited above half an hour, when Miss Byram made her appearance, drest as if she thought nothing was wanting to her good reception but finery, yet without the smallest pretensions to taste or even to neatness; far less did she consult her unfortunate person. She had, early as it was after Mr. Byram’s death, discarded all appearance of mourning; and above all she had, with *unequal*, but, it must be confessed, unbounded liberality, *rouged* her cheeks; and a row of trumpery beads round her neck shifting their place a little, discovered, that in aid of her complexion she used the more deleterious composition of white lead.

Dinner

Dinner passed with new disgusts every moment: the cloth was removed, and it was proposed that the company should adjourn to a room where they might judge of Miss Byram's musical attainments, of which she had given rather a favourable idea in her conversation, and her performance, excepting that it was deficient in *precision*, and *taste*, was *passeable*, that is to say, she scrambled through a cramp lesson *somewhat*; and when asked to sing, she squalled most dissonantly and most ignorantly the evening hymn to the Virgin—a sweet composition certainly, but not the best calculated just then to give pleasure.

“ I suppose, Elizabeth,” said Joanna “ you will not choose to go to church with us.”

“ Oh, atb for that I don't care—one *plaith* ith atb good atb another to me. I like church *beth* indeed, *becauh* there are more of the *tippieth* there.”

“ The

" The *tippeth*, indeed!" replied Mrs. Hahnaby, indignant at her cant.

Not knowing how otherwise to amuse her, and unwilling at present to begin with coercion, whist was proposed for the evening. Miss wanted to bet, but no one choosing to take her up, she was forced to play the plain game, which she did, not only with the finesse of a gamester by profession, but with all the cunning of a naturally disingenuous mind, inaccurate as to her score, and always supposing it more than it was. She had, in dudgeon, learnt that she was to play for no more than shillings, but in still greater dudgeon did she pay the few she had lost.

Joanna was determined to postpone all lecture till the morning. Having, therefore, suffered her to eat what she could not approve for her supper, and indulged her desire for *a fire in her room, a warm bed,*

bed, and somebody to sleep in her apartment for fear of ghosts, she dismissed her with her blessing and a bleeding heart to her rest.

Ynys Môn, a small island off the west coast of Wales, is the scene of the following legend. A young woman named Mary, the daughter of a poor fisherman, was walking along the beach one day when she saw a small boat being rowed by a man who was evidently lost at sea. She stopped to speak to him, and when he told her he was lost and had been at sea for many days, she took him into her boat and rowed him to the shore. The man was very grateful, and when he asked her name, she told him it was Mary. He then asked her if she would marry him, and she agreed. They were married, and lived happily together for many years. But one day, while Mary was working in the garden, she heard a voice calling her name. She turned and saw a ghostly figure standing behind her. The figure was dressed in a long white robe, and had long white hair. Mary was frightened, and ran away as fast as she could. The ghost followed her, and eventually caught her. Mary tried to fight back, but the ghost was too strong. She was taken to a dark, damp room, where she was forced to sleep. She was never seen again.

CHAP. XII.

IT was impossible for Joanna to close her eyes all night. She sat up till very late with Lord Armathwaite and Mrs. Halnaby, conversing on the unpromising prospect, and then retired to ruminate on the best means of remedying these sad defects, which she feared lay deeper than in Miss Byram's education.

She resolved, as the only means of gaining influence over her, to endeavor attaching her by kindness, but at the same time to put the earliest possible check on her follies.

Unwilling to break her rest, after her long fatigue, she suffered her to remain in bed till near noon the following day, and

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complied

complied with her desire to have her breakfast before she rose. Between one and two, the fair lady made her appearance, to the additional mortification of her expecting friends; for the cosmetics of the former day remained in sad disorder on her complexion, and the utmost flatternliness of morning deshabille disgraced her person.— She went to the windows, and observed on the dullness of the place. She enquired if there were no genteel families near; and how the people, that *were buried there*, did for balls, routs, plays, &c.

Joanna, with the chill of death over her, could give her no favorable answer. She owned that Chartham was not a very gay place, but that it was nevertheless possible to make it agreeable.— Miss remarked, in reply, that it was as bad as her papa's house in the north of Ireland; and the wretched mother, all impatience to begin some scheme of rectification, taking Miss Byram's hand and seating her by her, while to dis-
guise

guise her agitation she attempted to continue the work she had in hand, began to talk seriously to her of her new situation, and assuring her in the kindest terms of her sincere affection, and that her happiness depended only on herself, she conjured her to shew a docile spirit, and to endeavor at correcting some visible faults in her conduct:—faults, Joanna observed, for which not so much she, as those who had had the care of her education, were responsible.—She first intreated her, if she had any regard for her health, or the estimation of her friends, to discontinue the odious practice of making an artificial complexion.

Miss stoutly and unblushingly denied that her complexion was not her own. She said, the fire always caught her face, and gave her a color; but that was all.

This was sufficiently discouraging; but Joanna soon found that there was no point of admonition she could touch on without

stirring up some one of the evil qualities of her pupil's mind ; and, quite discouraged, she left off preaching, to enquire what attained accomplishments she had.

An investigation of this sort only served to prove that she had no habits of industry, no pursuits, no preferences :— *reading trash* seemed to have occupied the greatest portion of her time, next, it may be supposed, to dress. She had *heard* of all things, but could not *do* any thing, and affected to undervalue, as extremely easy, whatever modern education rendered requisite to elegance. But all these vexations Joanna, in her lowered hopes, would have borne patiently, could she have discovered the least ray of native integrity in the mind of her she deemed her daughter.

It was evident that the young lady had been committed wholly to the care of bad servants, who had fostered all her low vices, and kept her utterly ignorant of what she ought

ought to have been ; and a fortnight's trial, in which time was procured for her every amusement, except such as would have exposed her, that the far from *dull* city of Canterbury could afford, was sufficient to damp every expectation. Still, however, the matter was not given up ; and if Miss Byram happened, with a view to carrying any point, to be in better humor than ordinary, the family had hopes of her amendment. She was kept, per force, out of the kitchen, and from that which she seemed to have a great inclination to—conversation with the footmen ; and no servant but Lewis was allowed to speak to her :— poor disappointed Lewis ! whom nothing could persuade that this was the being she had so anxiously nurs'd, and so unfortunately lost from her care.—Happy would it have been for Joanna, could she have doubted : but the supposed impossibility of any change prevented her suspicions ; and the resemblance to Mr. Byram, which grew still more obvious on farther acquaintance, would

have lulled every suspicion, had any arisen; for the last thing thought on, would have been Lady Jemima's so far sacrificing the maternal sentiment, as to give up her child.

The consequence of Joanna's disappointment and incessant anxiety, was bodily illness; and Mrs. Halnaby, who detested Miss Byram, took care to inform her that she was the cause of her mother's indisposition, and that she thought it very probable, unless she mended her conduct, it might be the cause of her death.—“Then I hope I shall get away from *this nathy plaith*,” answered Miss.

Joanna's illness increased to a serious degree, and the apprehensions of her friends increased in proportion. Lord Armathwaite had written to his sister, first to inform her of his safe arrival with his young charge, and afterwards giving some hints of her untowardly disposition, but receiving no answer,

swer, he now again wrote very earnestly, condemning, in the bitterness of his heart, the shameful negligence that had educated only for misery, a creature so ill-conditioned, and still more reproaching his sister for the false character she had given of Elizabeth Byram. Finding all this unavailing, and, though hopeless of doing any thing by exertion, miserable in inaction, he resolved on an interview with his sister, whom he supposed still in Dublin, and accordingly set out for Ireland ; but there he found his labor unavailing —No one he enquired of knew, no one seemed to care, what was become of Lady Jemima Byram : — he could only hear it conjectured that Lord Surchester might have taken her into keeping ; and, in such quarters as those his lordship might have provided her, he thought it must be useless, and he was sure it must be equally infamous and painful, to seek her. He therefore returned in despair, and found Joanna some steps nearer the grave than when he left her, and her sup-

posed daughter a greater torment than ever.

As a visitation from Heaven, intended for some wise but inscrutable purpose, she would have submitted to, and sunk under, the dreadful affliction that completed the miseries of her life ; but neither the friendship of Mrs. Halnaby, nor the tender affection of Lord Armathwaite, could endure this inversion of the order of things, that the person receiving every benefit should be the destruction of the benefactor. All that reasoning could do had been tried in vain, by every one of those interested in Miss Byram's conduct ; and every appeal to sensibility, or the common feeling of the lowest class of rational beings, had been equally ineffectual.

Miss Byram had shewn no curiosity as to the unusual events that had so long separated her from the person now claiming her ; but Joanna had informed her, with

as

as much tenderness as possible to the memory of her father, that he had early in life married without the privity of his friends, and had been afterwards compelled to a match with Lady Jemima ; that she was the issue of this former marriage, and now, by the death of her father, restored to her surviving parent, who would with rapture procure for her every advantage of a far more eligible situation than that she had been taken from, provided she would do what was in her power to merit it. On the other hand, she was told that, should she disappoint the wishes of her friends, the being boarded with strangers, in the cheapest and most obscure manner, was the best she had to expect.

The young lady, it must be confessed, did not turn a deaf ear to these alternatives. She listened attentively to the bribe held out to her, and enquired into every particular that her avarice or her vanity could suggest ; but, finding that most of her

gratifications were to be purchased by desert, she was not greatly allured by the prospect.

In her own private opinion, she was not the person her new friends imagined her: she could not believe herself not to be Lady Jemima's daughter; but not caring, in the smallest degree, for her real parent, and remembering that one, and not the least cogent, of Lady Jemima's arguments to induce her to leave her, was her utter inability to provide for her, she was very well contented to leave all parties in their error, provided she herself benefited by it: but admonition succeeding to admonition, her injurious indulgences being curtailed, an industrious use of her time being exacted, and above all every pleasure, even the going to London, being postponed till she shewed signs of a good disposition, her patience flagged, and wherever Lady Jemima might be, as she had no idea of her being

being so low as she really was, she wished herself with her.

In the beginning of May, her conduct, in every particular, became so disgraceful, and Joanna's situation was rendered so precarious by it, that Lord Armathwaite, who waited only some symptoms of her recovery to urge her giving him a title to protect her; and Mrs. Halnaby, who was equally anxious, lest she herself should be taken from her, to see her united to the only comforter the world could then afford her, insisted on her exerting her spirit against this new misfortune, and regarding alone her own more important health: and, as the only means of giving a respite to her daily mortification, and of reclaiming the depraved girl, it was proposed that she should be sent for one year to a good school, and that in the mean time her mother should try what change of scene and air could do towards the re-establishing her own health.

The affection with which her best friends urged this plan, gave Joanna an interest in its success. She thought, if the place of her daughter's abode were well chosen, it afforded the greatest hope of retrieving her; and the sea air having been strongly recommended for herself, she consented to go to the coast for a few weeks, and, should she find the expected benefit, to postpone her marriage only till her return.

Her heart was somewhat lightened by having made this determination; and having, while she lived in the neighbourhood of London, had opportunities of observing the uncommonly excellent discipline of a most respectable boarding-school in the village she lodged in, she decided on sending Elizabeth thither; and the next day acquainted the young lady with her plan.

It met all the opposition that might reasonably be expected from an indolent girl, who saw she must now be employed.

Miss

Miss complained, cried, scolded, and at last threatened ; but all in vain, for her sorrow was not accompanied with what Joanna had hoped for—a promise of reformation. A letter therefore was immediately written to the governess of the school, stating very frankly the difficult task assigned her, and the importance of her accepting it, offering her at the same time whatever pecuniary compensation she judged adequate to such a trouble.

It was necessary, while waiting the completion of this negociation, to keep Miss Byram almost a close prisoner ; for she had given some intimations of an intention to run away.—A joyful measure ! could poor Joanna have been easy in neglecting her.

Unfortunately, though the governess of the school had been, after many scruples, prevailed on to admit Miss Byram, she could not receive her till after the Mid-summer vacation : this protracted the sufferings

ferings of the family till the last week in July, when Miss had her face thoroughly washed and her hair combed out of powder, and was put into Lord Armathwaite's chaise, he having undertaken the formidable office of delivering her safe.—His affairs, neglected for the sake of Joanna, called him away, and he proposed to return about the time she revisited Chartham.

The same day the two ladies set off for the sea-coast.

CHAP. XIII.

PEREGRINA lived not three weeks in Lady Cottisbrooke's family, before she discovered the jealousy and malignity with which Lady Almerina Delaford was endeavouring to remove her. It was Lady Cottisbrooke's benevolent wish to consider the three young women she had the care of as her friends, and as friends to each other; and nothing was wanting on her part to realize the idea. Not inattentive to the world's distinctions, though in her own heart regarding them little, she paid due respect to the rank of Lady Almerina Delaford; but the countess-elect saw with mortification and envy, that however scrupulous Lady Cottisbrooke was in her etiquette, Peregrina possessed by much the larger share of her affection; and that often

often when in their walks she omitted not the *ceder le pas* to her, she was linked arm in arm with Peregrina, with eyes intent on the beautiful motion of her lips, and the expression of her features while she spoke.

Lady Almerina had too much penetration to be satisfied with the pageant she was treated with ; and however justly and inevitably regard was bestowed on merit, and approbation followed laudable exertion, her spirits would not brook it. Another subject of mortification irritated her : she had, on first coming to Lady Cottisbrooke's, undertaken, as a very easy matter, the fixing Lady Essex's attention to music, reading, &c. &c. but a week's trial had convinced her, if not of her presumption, of her pupil's incapacity ; and she gave up the effort. Peregrina had been at least so far successful, as to win Lady Essex's love, and to keep her employed for some hours in the morning ; and for this Lady Cottisbrooke felt extremely grateful,

grateful, while Lady Almerina, by malicious insinuations, and by catechising the silly girl before her mother in a way that must have terrified and embarrassed her, endeavored to shew that Peregrina's abilities were not greater than her own. Through this, however, Lady Cottisbrooke penetrated, and attributing it to a pique of juvenile emulation, she passed it over in silence.

Those unfortunate rivalries which spring up between female candidates for admiration at public amusements, had never disturbed the peace of Peregrina, who in her most negligent hilarity did not forget that her situation took from her every claim to particular regard. She had, while in London, been often flushed with the compliments bestowed on her person; nor was she as insensible to its advantages as when she crossed the Irish channel; but even in her short observation of the world, she had learnt, that if a young woman has
only

only her beauty to boast, she has a small chance of listening to flatterers with impunity. She had seen many, in her idea far preferable to herself, but nearly as destitute of friends and fortune, either beguiled to their ruin, or deluded into hopes that were designed to end in disappointment. She had seen many grow vain on the notice of a superior coxcomb, and fall into contempt when neglected; and determining that she would never add one to this number, she had heard all, but believed none. For herself she had no views; the future was a chaos to her;—she still thought it impossible to marry without love, and to love without a return; and in the circle she had moved in, seeing no one whom she could love with a hope of being beloved, she had kept her heart perfectly safe in its integrity. She therefore, when obliged by Lady Cottisbrooke's urgency to make one in their engagements, to frequent the balls, the concerts, the plays, the libraries, &c. went with no other view than that of being

being amused; and as, preferring sentiment to fashion, it was her intention not to lay aside her mourning for Mr. Byram till the year was expired, she was no competitor in dress; she had no emulation, no anxiety.

But Peregrina was one of those—shall we call them *favored* beings? whom nothing can divest of the power of charming: and though the rank of Lady Almerina Delaford and of Lady Essex Courtland might secure the attention of the punctiliose peer or the assiduous *honorable younger branch*, men of this description were few; and the attraction of loveliness proved stronger than of title. Lady Essex was too indiscriminating, and indeed too good-natured, to be jealous; but it wounded Lady Almerina's pride deeply to see the homage of all the most fashionable men directed to a plebeian altar. That her hand was engaged for life to Lord Cottisbrooke was no counterbalance to the mortifica-

mortification of being, for a few hours, condemned, by her rank, to teach Lord Lubberkin or Sir Harry Heaviside which was his right hand, or how to shift his place. She felt oppressed by an indefinable superiority, which never failed to mortify and irritate her.

On the contrary, Lady Cottisbrooke, who considered her ward as disposed of much to her advantage, and who never intended her daughter to marry till she could find a man disposed to be very kind to her foibles, would have been extremely gratified could she, by the influence of her rank and estimation, have bestowed Peregrina in marriage on some one who could prefer beauty and merit to money and pedigree; and for this reason, satisfied that she did no injury to the pretensions of her other two young ladies, she never failed to introduce her to notice; and such notice as her's, while it placed its object in a most favorable point of view, made many a man a serious

serious admirer who had meant only a little flirting.

The arrival of the Assingtons diverted Lady Almerina's attention; and in the credit and authority she obtained by introducing such rich young ladies to her admiring friends, she found some retribution for her frequent mortifications. None of the Assingtons were handsome enough to excite envy, and, like the rest of the world, despising the advantage they had in possession, and sighing after what they could not obtain, they saw no charm in their wealth, but sighed for the distinction of title. They thought Lady Almerina, with only fifteen hundred pounds, and Lady Essex, with not three ideas, far happier beings than themselves.

Peregrina, remembering their kindness to her in London, rejoiced at their arrival, and had no reason to complain of their coolness in accepting her congratulation.

*They really liked the dear little girl vastly—
Harriet declared she quite loved her—she
was a charming, amiable, modest, humble,
inoffensive character; and ——— we all
know how our vanity is gratified by the
ostentation of protecting what may in time
reflect credit on us; but let the *protégée*
beware how she dares put herself in com-
petition with us.*

Lady Almerina was not so negligent to her own interests as to omit giving *the dear Affingtons* some useful hints; and at their return home from the rooms the first ball night, Peregrina, had she been quick-sighted, might have perceived things not very pleasant; for she and Lady Essex were the only two of the party that had danced; gentlemen were, owing to a great dinner at St. Sebastian's, extremely scarce. Lady Almerina, who knew that the marquis, for whom she had, at her birth-day gala, laid snares, was of the party, was determined to reserve her hand till his arrival,

rival, which in the morning he had promised her could not be late when she was his attraction. Miss Assington, sufficiently repaid by being allowed to promenade with Lady Almerina, would not have danced had she been asked, till her friend was engaged. The buzz ran round the room that her ladyship waited for the marquis, and report, with her hundred echoes, soon gave it out that not only her ladyship, but the three ladies in silver muslins with her, waited the re-inforcement from St. Sebastian's. They had no opportunity offered them of contradicting the error; and they sat down, and paraded, and laughed, and fretted all the evening; for the noble marquis had irrevocably forgotten, in some excellent Burgundy, the promise he had given.

In the mean time Lady Essex danced with the youngest lad in the room, the son of an intimate friend, whose wish coincided with Lady Cottisbrooke's, that her daughter

daughter should not change her partner during the ball. Miss Lamorne had been engaged half a dozen deep ever since the last ball, and none of her knights failed of the assignation.

But a greater pleasure than any these victories could afford her, and a greater compensation than she needed against the childish ill humor she excited, was conveyed to her in the frequent correspondence of Ami Bonange, to whom, without reserve, she communicated all that respected her present situation; and who never failed to give her the best intelligence, the best advice, and the most encouraging approbation. He was still mysterious, but wonderfully well informed of all that passed, and more earnest than ever in his expressions of deep interest in her welfare.

In two days after the arrival of the A. fingtons, Captain Courtland joined them, on a day and at an hour Ami Bonange had

had predicted: he looked ill, and very much emaciated; and at meeting again Miss Lamorne, whom he had so fortunately rescued, he shewed a degree of joy which was variously construed. Lady Almerina and Miss Affington decided on his being violently attached to Miss Lamorne. Harriet, his intended bride, knew too well the importance of her riches to him to believe his heart could swerve, while Marianne, the youngest and the prettiest, and who had long wished herself Harriet, saw in it *nothing more than common*, but perceived very plainly that he cared not for her sister; and on these slender promises founded the conclusion that it was not impossible to attract him to herself.

Far different from all these opinions was that of Peregrina, who fancied, at the moment of his address to her, that she had at length discovered her secret friend and correspondent, Ami Bonange. She knew he had been entered of the university of

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Oxford, which might give him connexions there: he was a scampering young man, scarcely ever two days in a place; and nothing that she could recollect ever entirely contradicting the possibility of his being at Oxford or at Canterbury when her letters were dated, she decided on the point to her own satisfaction, but resolved to be cautious in her conduct.

All Lady Cottisbrooke's endeavours were directed towards amusing the Miss Assingtons, who received her civilities, and conducted themselves in a way that Peregrina soon saw gave her ladyship no pleasure; for spirited up by Lady Almerina, one half of their gaiety was calculated to mortify the unoffending *protégée*; and they had not been one week in the house, before Lady Cottisbrooke, in a quarter of an hour's stolen conversation with her favorite, hinted at the little satisfaction their company gave her, and, with a sigh, lamented that Hamilton's narrow fortune

made

made it necessary he should seek a wife with money.

Indeed it was to be lamented; for it was but too plain, that however prudence, or deference for his mother's judgment, might dispose docile Captain Courtland towards Harriet Assington, and she of the three was his favorite, yet he did not entertain for her those sentiments that promised happiness in their union; and the airs she gave herself on the strength of their engagement, the contempt with which it was her amusement to treat him, and the command all the three sisters affected to have over him, could neither be unobserved by common sagacity, nor borne by a liberal spirit.

Every day still farther confirmed Peregrina's suspicion of his being her *good genius*; and her receiving a letter from Canterbury during his visit, was no contradiction, as he generally rode over there,

H 2 with

with his friend Bergholt, three or four times in a week. In her next reply she hinted that she thought herself in possession of the secret; but fearful of offending, she added, that now he had such frequent opportunities of seeing her, she left it to him either to continue to act on the reserve, or to receive those acknowledgements she should ever be happy to pay him.

After his next visit to Canterbury, where she supposed he would meet her letter, she more intently watched him, and was still farther convinced by the increased interest of his behavior to her. Indeed, whether right or wrong in this conjecture, Peregrina might, had she not been defended by her simplicity and humility, have been seriously alarmed at his deportment, which was so strongly indicative of a very ardent passion for her, that even Harriet Affington, confident as she was in her own ~~wishes~~, and the softer Marianne, who was always

always deeply in love with the last man that had been civil to her, could not shut their eyes against the conviction; and Lady Cottisbrooke herself might have been suspicious, had not Lady Almerina, before any thing of the kind was visible to eyes not sharpened by malignity, assured her of the fact with a degree of earnestness that made her own interestedness in the slander a reason for disbelieving it; but Lady Cottisbrooke had the highest reliance on Hamilton's honor: she had his word, that since he saw it would give her pleasure, Harriet Assington should be his wife; and she was therefore not only perfectly easy on that head, but not displeased sometimes to see the Assingtons a little taken down by Hamilton's leaving them to escort themselves, and bestowing his attentions on her they seemed assiduous in neglecting. Seeing clearly Harriet's faults, she was glad to perceive that her son understood the art of managing her temper.

CHAP. XIV.

THE party was again increased, but in a way not very pleasant to Peregrina; for Hamilton brought home with him, on this return from Canterbury, Sir Edward Berg-holt, who in some pet had soon quitted his boarding-house at Margate, and was living about the country, at a loss to suit himself. —Lady Cottisbrooke received him, as she always did the friends of her son, with hospitality and smiles; and, though he came with an intention of remaining but a few days, she prevailed on him not at present to seek another abode.

He was much more rational and steady than Peregrina had ever seen him; and he soon proved himself an agreeable addition to the family. Peregrina could have no remaining

remaining suspicion that he favored the Haccombes ; for, to her first question after them, he replied, “ *Let us pass such characters over in silence !* ” She therefore forbore again to mention them ; and it was not long before she had reason to believe that he had developed the family iniquity, and broken sweet Mrs. Barnby’s fetters : for Mariannne Assington’s Circassian countenance seemed to have charms for him ; and he returned, if he did not encourage, the languishing attractions which, as the last unmarried man she had popt on, were his due.

Compared with Captain Courtland, Sir Edward Bergholt, though less admired by the misses, was an important conquest, should he recover the perfect use of his reason ; for he must shortly come into a very fine income, such as would maintain a peerage ; a beautiful seat in the centre of the kingdom waited for him to inhabit it ; his family was very ancient ; his connex-

ions were very great, and alienated from him only by his father's absurd partiality for the new nabob Haccombe; and the lady he should marry must instantly enjoy a title, that did not herd with the vulgar *Mrs. Simkinsons* and *Mrs. Hodgkinsons*.

These weighty considerations shook *Harriet's* firmness, and she could not patiently observe her younger sister's chance. She treated Courtland worse than ever, put herself eternally in Sir Edward's way, and having once heard him say that, though he did not think very highly of Miss Lamorne's person or attractions, he liked her honesty and good temper, she became vastly fond of Peregrina, and proportionably cross to Marianne.

They had proceeded thus jockeying and jarring for some days, Sir Edward's attentions towards Marianne increasing, Captain Courtland taking advantage of Harriet's ill humor to attach himself to Miss Lamorne, and

and she giving him every opportunity of confessing himself the person she supposed him, when, without any other previous notice than a servant on horseback preceding a post-chaise, just as they were rising from dinner one afternoon, entered the earl of Cottisbrooke, who was supposed by his family to have been then at Turin or Naples.

The surprise of seeing him thus unexpectedly, was almost too much for his mother's spirits ; and while Lady Almerina courted his notice by a familiar nod and an extension of her hand, and the Assingtons bridled to be seen by *the lord*, Lady Effex and Peregrina were endeavoring to quiet the agitation of his mother's joy. It was some minutes before she could enquire the reason of his sudden return ; and she seemed much gratified to hear that it was a report of her ill health, and consequent retreat to Margate, that had occasioned his precipitate journey : he said, his fears had been

relieved, on his landing at Dover, by the account he there procured of her; that his stay would be short, unless she thought, as he did, that he had seen enough of foreign nonsense; that his tutor waited at Calais, where he had left him, either to proceed again with him, or to accompany another English *milord* going his route.—Lady Cottisbrooke was satisfied and pleased: and well she might be so; for it was the first instance of filial affection she had ever received from this son, who had quitted England an impenetrable blockhead, but seemed to have returned something else—what it was, time was to discover.

His garb and fashion were entirely exotic. His person was diminutive, his complexion extremely dark, and his nose and chin kept at due distance only by a very wide mouth with thin lips and a more than commonly good set of teeth. An odd twist of his figure made it questionable whether he was perfectly

perfectly strait; and every motion of his limbs evinced how great care had been requisite to preserve him, in his infancy, from the rickets.

The contracted sagacity which marked his brow was increased by the incessant application of the glass, which enabled him to discern distant objects. He had a chattering volubility, and a decision of emphasis, that might impose; but he seldom knew his own meaning, or could enable any one else to decypher it:—what his pursuits and passions were, was not to be developed in an interview. Finding the party engaged to the evening dance at the rooms, he summoned his valet, who had travelled in the chaise with him; and prepared to accompany them.

Whatever might be Lady Almerina's private opinion of her betrothed husband, she exerted all the importance that her right

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to him gave her, and, not chusing to see that he had bestowed very little notice on her at his entrance, she was inflated with the eclat of her situation when she had to exhibit him.

Her exultation continued, to the annoyance of all that came in her way, till she saw her friend, the negligent appointment-forgetting marquis, enter the room, who, making up to her, and not knowing Lord Cottisbrooke, protested upon his soul, how grieved he was for the infernal accident that had deprived him of the celestial felicity of attending her flattering commands.

Seated between the two noblemen, not knowing yet how she liked the travelled man, but certain that it was a delightful thing to be a duchess, she bestowed the far greater part of her attention on him who had the least claim to it ; and Lord Cottisbrooke might have been offended, had he been

been in the humor ; but he was otherwise occupied.

Miss Assington herself, who had till now fired at random amongst the rank and file of single men, was this evening furnished with a mark to aim at ; for having been sufficiently in Lady Almerina's councils, to know that she thought it *a delightful thing to be a duchess*, she had some hopes of succeeding to her cast-off lover, should the slender marquis cause a breach between the contracting parties. Her height and figure, she thought, counterbalanced the more striking disadvantages of a bad complexion and disproportioned features ; and recollecting the advantage of her money, she had no small hope that, as *such things had been, such things might be.*

On Miss Lamorne, who in the confusion of his entrance had not been introduced to him, and whose name he learnt as it were by

by chance, Lord Cottisbrooke bestowed no attention that could give offence. In the arrangement for the first dances, Hamilton Courtland engaged her; and though as earnest as possible to improve the opportunity into conversation, and in a very serious if not melancholy mood, she could get no satisfaction on the one point of doubt.— She thought him a finished piece of prudence: she wondered at his retention: she gave him credit for superior abilities.— How little did she think of her own power over him!

Lord Cottisbrooke had taken up, as form commanded him, with Lady Almerina: Sir Edward Bergholt had seized on Marianne Affington: Captain Courtland had asked a friend to take Harriet; and the elder Miss Affington sat still by Lady Cottisbrooke and Lady Essex, who, as being to bathe the next morning, was not allowed to dance. In the lottery of the amusement,

Lord

Lord Cottisbrooke attached himself to this elder of the three fatal sisters, and her hope was fast growing up into faith, while Lady Almerina, who wished much to be at an early certainty, played all her artillery against the slender person, and still more slender intellects, of the slender marquis.

The family-party now seemed to have each their respective parts assigned them; and, in their domestic scenes, they supported them with tolerable propriety. It seemed almost a settled point that Lord Cottisbrooke, whom every revolving hour shewed more and more a *petit maitre*, and whose ignorance of what he had been purposedly to see was most ludicrously glaring, should diverge towards the wealthy Miss Assington, that Lady Almerina should accept in his stead the marquis, who had by degrees introduced himself at Lady Cottisbrooke's, that Sir Edward Bergholt should take to gentle Marianne; and, for want of another

another object, Harriet was compelled to continue, at least in supposition, the property of Captain Courtland.—For Lady Essex, no one was laid out; and as for poor Peregrina, though she had many in her suite, and some that looked a little serious, it was *supposed*, because it was *hoped*, that a girl without a penny, and *whom nobody knew*, but as a kind of unpensioned governess or vice-deputy companion to Lady Essex, could not possibly have any acceptable offer from the superior ranks.

While matters were in this state, Peregrina received a letter from Ami Bonange, in which her having made the discovery was noticed; and she was told that if, at the next opportunity of their unwitnessed conversation, she would *express a wish for a developement, and would promise to be as secret as her friend was sincere*, she should be gratified.

She

She waited some days for this opportunity, fearful of taking any step that might endanger her; and in the mean time the slender marquis left the sea-coast in a hurry, to repair to his father's castle, where awaited him the hand of beauty, wealth, and political influence.—Lady Almerina was thunder-struck; but knowing full well the ridicule she should meet with, if clamorous, she very prudently took in her sails, and coasted round again to Lord Cottisbrooke, jostling most cruelly in her way the too sanguine Miss Affington, who with difficulty postponed giving vent to the rancor of her disappointment.

CHAP. XV.

PEREGRINA saw all this in silence, and, feeling no interest in their squabbles, with indifference. She recollects Ami Bonange's predictions concerning the Assingtons, and was comforted that she had not been betrayed into confidence or friendship. She was more intent on getting an audience of Captain Courtland; and an opportunity offered when she least expected it; for as she was sitting one morning with Lady Essex, endeavoring to make her understand why she always saw the sun set toward the west, he opened the room-door, and taking advantage of his sister's sitting with her back towards him, he with a respectful motion of his hand beckoned Miss Lamorne out. She made an excuse to her pupil, and quitting the room, saw him waiting on the

the stairs for her. She followed in some palpitation, but yet delighted with the idea of acknowledging, in person, services so important, and a correspondence so consolatory as that of Ami Bonange.

Not questioning the errand she came on, she suffered Hamilton to turn the key in the door of the little parlor, to which he introduced her, without any opposition from her prudence; and with a smile, and a little hesitation that kept her silent, she stood before him in a posture of attention. She perceived now, that his countenance was more disturbed than was adequate to the cause—and she still was silent.

Almost breathless, he began :

“ My dearest Miss Lamorne, forgive my rudeness!—I have no excuse but the extremity I am driven to!—I could not leave this place without speaking to you.—I am called instantly to my regiment; and

and it is possible our destination may be to the French coast, or to the West Indies."

" I am sorry for it with all my heart, sir.—What a loss I shall sustain ! "

" *You* will sustain ! — Do I hear you say so ? — Do you, Miss Lamorne, say so ?

" Certainly," she replied with a faltering voice, " it is of great importance to me, for you have been an invaluable friend.—I certainly wish for the developement I now expect from you ; and I give you my word to be as secret as you are sincere."

" Then I am indeed happy ! " he replied, clapping his hands together with energy.—" My friendship for you, Miss Lamorne, makes me more than ever anxious — "

Hasty footsteps interrupted the dialogue. Hamilton jumped through the window into the

the garden.. Peregrina, in trepidation, hastily unlocked the door, and took up the news-paper ; and in came Marianne Asfington, in violent commotion.

It was evident that she had been in tears, and Peregrina begged to know what had distressed her.

“ My dear Lamorne,” she replied, “ I am in the deepest affliction possible ; and nothing that I can think on, except your interference, can assist me.”

Peregrina begged her to relieve her anxiety, by telling her how she could serve her.

“ I must first,” answered Marianne, shutting the door, “ entrust you with an important secret — a secret of great importance to me.—Sir Edward has a tenderness for me ; and I have been so unfortunate, by some reserve I perhaps carried too far,

to

to offend him. He is going away almost directly with Courtland ; and I cannot," added she, bursting into a roar of crying—“ I cannot endure the thoughts of his going away angry with me.”

“ I am extremely sorry,” replied Peregrina ; “ but—but really I do not see how it is in my power to prevent Sir Edward’s going, or to--to-to—”

Peregrina had too much delicacy even to suggest the mediation Marianne came to urge ; but the crying girl continued,

“ Yes, yes, you can, and you must.—I only want you to contrive to see him, and tell him he will break my heart—that you know he will break my heart, if he goes away angry with me.”

“ Indeed—indeed, Miss Assington, you must excuse me.”

“ No,

“ No, no,” said Marianne, vehemently, “ you must do it, and do it directly.”

“ Will it not have a very odd appearance, coming from me?—Had you not better send to him, and speak yourself? ”

“ No, no; there can be no impropriety in *your* going, because you are nobody of consequence.”

“ True!—But then how can I expect him to listen to me? ” asked Miss Lamorne, smiling at the good reason given her.

“ Oh! he will listen to you, I am sure; for once, when Lady Cottisbrooke was praising your manner of speaking, I heard him say, he hoped such a tongue as yours would never be set to persuade him to do wrong.”

“ I am obliged to him for the compliment, if it be one.—But who would trust to

to the opinion of Sir Edward?—You know he is not always in his right senses."

" Oh! but he is now, I am sure.—Now do, pray Miss Lamorne, go!—and I will give you—I will give you twenty guineas:—I do not mind money."

" Now," said Peregrina, turning from her with a rejecting wave of her hand, " you have determined me to refuse you.—What my *judgment* forbids me to do, Miss Marianne, no *bribe* shall ever tempt me to."

" I beg your pardon, my dearest Lamorne! Indeed, I did not mean to offend you!—But, if you love me," added the disconsolate lady, dropping on her knees,—" if you would not see me die of a broken heart, do, God bless you, only go to Edward, and tell him his unhappy Marianne would rather die, than part from him in anger!"

" Are

“ Are you sure,” asked Peregrina, with a suspecting look, “ that you are on terms to justify this ? ”

“ O yes,” she answered, “ upon my honor.—I dare not tell you all I could of his attachment to me ; but—”

“ You are not privately married to him : are you ? ”

“ No : he cannot marry for some months.”

“ Well,” said Peregrina, after a pause, “ I think I am wrong, and I dare say I shall have reason to repent my interference ; but I will go, rather than see you so unhappy.”

Marianne jumped up from her suppliant posture, and would have sent her mediatrix, *as a person of no consequence*, without any previous warning ; but in this

particular she begged to have her own way, and sent a servant to request to know where she might immediately speak with Sir Edward Bergholt.

He sent word, he would wait on her instantly ; and Marianne withdrew.

The moments of expectation were painful. She thought of Courtland, and she wished to think on him ; and she had no great relish for the interview she had been forced to request.

Sir Edward entered the room, and seating himself on the sash-frame of the window, half in the house and half *al fresco*, he made up a countenance fit for hearing a long story.

She began with apologising for her summons.

He considered himself as honored by it.

Thus

Thus encouraged, she proceeded to relate, in the best manner she could, poor Marianne's distress.

His countenance changed frequently as she spoke ; and she sometimes feared she had touched on a string which might jar on his newly regained faculties ; but when she paused, he said,

“ Do not imagine, when I declare myself astonished at your application, and unmoved by it, that I mean either to blame that or to deprecate your powers. Your good nature has been imposed on ; the blame rests with those who have deceived you ; you have discharged a very painful office most faithfully, and for that I honor you ; but I must set you right, that you may neither blame me nor yourself. Marianne Affington has been very *obliging* to me ; and she has taken this method to remind me of it ; there has been no quarrel between us, I assure you ; nor can there ever

be any, for we are totally independent of each other. When first, on finding my health improved by the sea-air, she spread her tresses to catch my heart—a heart, God knows! worth nobody's coveting; I frankly warned her to expect no return from me; for that my best affections were bestowed where, without even the common food of fallacious hope, they had made their eternal nest."

There was anguish in his countenance; there was a glistening tear in his eye, as he pronounced these words, and Peregrina, when he paused, fearing that she might betray too much of sympathy, interrupted his proceeding by apologising for her error, and would have retired to seek Marianne; but he stopt her and went on :

" I cannot bear you should think me culpable in this matter; I would not for the world be cruel; but who could have thought that the frivolous chit-chat of such

an unhappy mortal as myself could have been so misconstrued ? There is but one woman in the world I ever loved, or ever can love : this Marianne knows."

Peregrina instantly thought on Mrs. Barnby ; but this was knowledge not to be revealed ; and he again went on, after a short pause :

" Who could have believed that either the heron-like Miss Assington, the swan-like Harriet, or the dove-like Marianne, with their money, their ambition, and their worldly eyes, could have cast a thought on me, with the risque of poverty before me, with a head not at all able to cope with the subtleties of the world, and a heart which hopeless love, and the most cruel deceit, and the most malignant persecution, have all rent to tatters ! ! "

" Be calm, Sir Edward, for heaven's sake," interrupted Peregrina, fearing he was growing frantic.

“ You may trust me *bere*,” he replied ;
“ I have nothing but misery before me.”

“ Your fancy deceives you.”

“ No, no, it does not.”

“ You cannot be in any danger of poverty.”

“ I am ; for I have secret information, that that villain, Haccombe, did not return from India the Crœsus he gave himself out for ;—that he has been living on my money ;—that he has, by means of a will, which he pretends to be mine, and in the certainty that I cannot survive many months, raised large sums on my estates.—The blind partiality of my father, who was prejudiced against me, gave me and every part of my property into his power ; and I believe the villain has ruined me. You will not, I know, divulge this ; but who would not go mad, like me, with such treatment ?”

“ God

“ God forbid it should be so bad ! ” said Peregrina with her handkerchief at her eyes ; “ but still your love is not, I can take on me to say, hopeless , ” added she, too anxious for his ease.

“ How do you know ? Is it not ? ” he asked, changing his posture in a moment.

“ No , ” she replied : “ ask me no questions , but believe me your affection is duly returned . ”

“ Is it ? thou angel of peace , ” said he , with up-lifted hands and eyes ; but still that would make me only more wretched ; but do you understand me ? do I not deceive myself ? ”

“ I do understand you ; you do not deceive yourself Mrs. Barnby :—O Lord ! I have said too much . ”

“ Mrs. Barnby ?” he repeated, “ and who told you that it was Mrs. Barnby I loved ?”

“ I had *hoped* it,” she answered.

“ Why hoped it ?”

“ Because she loves you.”

“ I believe so, from my soul,” said he, jumping on his feet ; “ but however, let us talk no more on this subject. Is this all your business with me, Miss Lamorne ? had you nothing else to say ?”

She said, “ she came only to plead for Miss Marianne Affington.”

“ Then, pray, with my compliments, tell Miss Marianne Affington, she is a great fool ; and that I advise her for the future to be cautious of playing such tricks.”

He then bowed, passed her, and left her excessively hurt at her facility, and not a little angry at the errand she had been sent on.

Not having any natural love for scolding, she was fearful of meeting her employer, before reason had regained its dominion over her resentment; and she glided to a distant apartment, in silence, to cool by recollection; but a message following from the impatient lady, she wrote to her;

“ Fearful, Madam, that I might, if we met, forget in the mortification you have cruelly exposed me to, the respect due to your superior situation, permit me to make my pen rather than my tongue inform you of my ill success; but I fear, I hardly need, in any way, tell you, that Sir Edward disclaims equally all knowledge of the offence you assured me he had taken, and all right of being offended. You assured me, on your honor, Madam, that

my mediation was justified by the terms you were on with him : you could not but know you deceived me ; and surely you have degraded yourself.

“ Suffer me to add, Madam, and make due allowances for the indignation I feel, by considering the provocation given me, that however contemptible I may appear in your eyes, I have a spirit to resent such treatment ; and that nothing will erase it from my memory, unless you will condescend to say you are sorry for the pain you have given to

Your very humble, but not abject,
PEREGRINA LAMORNE.”

No answer was returned by Miss Marianne ; but Peregrina soon after saw the three sisters arm in arm walking in the garden, in very close conversation. She was engaged to ride on horseback with Lady Essex, to Pegwell Bay, and she hastened to dress. Hamilton accompanied them ; and the rest

of

of the family were left to amuse themselves, as had been projected, by a sail, for which the day was uncommonly favorable.

But to her great surprise, on returning home, she saw Miss Assingtons' coach preparing as if for an excursion, and their servants moving about very briskly ; she followed Lady Effex into the fitting-room, with some curiosity to know what had deranged their plan, Captain Courtland quitting them to finish his preparations.

Many tongues in high tones were audible, as the door was opened. There was a formidable circle of the ladies only ; and Lady Cottisbrooke sitting in a dejected posture, and with an uneasy aspect, was saying in a mild voice, and therefore the only one distinguishable, “ I can only say, that I am extremely sorry any thing unpleasant has arisen in my family ; and I wish all animosity forgotten : but here comes Miss

Lamorne ; she can perhaps better justify herself than I can."

" It is out of her *power* to justify herself," said Miss Harriet.

" I am sure, what I have said is very —," said Miss Marianne, cut short of her conclusion, by the sight of Peregrina.

" I do not know," said Miss Assington, " that Miss Lamorne is so much to blame ; but I think some other people have cause to blush."

" If you mean me, Madam," replied Lady Almerina, who sat in the window, with her arms crossed, and her feet extended, " you had better say no more ; for I am not obliged to bear your insolence. It was your own fault, if you were deceived ; — pretty, indeed, to suppose, because your father scraped together such vulgar fortunes for

for you all, that every man you met was to be in love with your money! Lord Cottisbrooke does not value money; he has no need—but he would think himself very much disgraced by an attachment to a banker's daughter. Why I have heard your father lived at a sign!"

" Pray, my dear madam," said Peregrina, bending in a whisper to Lady Cottisbrooke, " what is the matter?"

" I cannot tell you," she answered; " you will hear."

Miss Affington had replied with due sharpness to Lady Almerina, with a hint or two at *poor nobility*, and concluding with an admonition to her ladyship not to provoke her too far.

Lady Almerina's answer was a defiance, and the Marquis and Lord Cottisbrooke would have been the next topics, if Miss Harriet

Harriet had not, with much superciliousness, hoped Miss Lamorne left Captain Courtland well.

“ We have but just quitted our horses,” said Peregrina innocently; “ I know nothing of him since.”

“ *You* take care to have two strings to *your* bow,” said Miss Marianne, addressing herself to Peregrina, and bowing from the back of her chair, against which she leaned, as she sat.

“ I do not understand you, madam.”

“ I dare say,” she replied, speaking to her sisters, “ the coach must be ready—Let us go.”

“ Not,” said Peregrina, “ till, with Lady Cottisbrooke’s leave, I request to know in what *I* have offended.”

“ In

“ In being too *unoffending*, I believe,” replied Lady Cottisbrooke in a low tone of displeasure.

“ Nay, my dear,” said Lady Almerina to her with the sauciest air possible, “ it is I am the principal aggressor. Miss Affington is angry with me because I would not run away with the marquis, that she might have secured Cottisbrooke to herself.”

“ No, Lady Almerina,” answered the offended fair—“ I am angry at your *duplicity*—you were laying snares for the marquis, while you were engaged to Lord Cottisbrooke.”

“ If that is all, sister,” said Harriet, “ I should not concern myself with other people’s faults; but I think Miss Lamorne, who is so much admired for her *good sense* and *prudence*, might have had more regard for her character than to flirt with Captain Courtland, and shut herself up with Sir

Edward Bergholt at once; but I will take care, madam, to place your character in such a light, that not a gentleman in this or any other county shall ever make you an offer."

"Flirt with Captain Courtland and Sir Edward Bergholt?" repeated Peregrina in a tone of surprise. "When did I do so?"

"Come, come," said Lady Cottisbrooke, "I must take the liberty of imposing some restraint on your language, ladies. If any one has been injured, let the injury be proved or controverted fairly. With regard to Lady Almerina and Miss Assington, I must say that they have been, as young women often and very excusably are, too anxious about their attachments. If Lady Almerina was dazzled by the marquis's civilities, I cannot believe she would seriously have used my son ill; and if Miss Assington, for want of knowledge of

of her, supposed her so capricious, Lady Almerina ought not to quarrel with what, had she not been mistaken, would have proved so convenient to her, as taking my son off her hands."

" No," interposed Harriet, " I cannot see that that was so bad; but Captain Courtland's conduct—"

" Do you mean his speaking to me this morning?" said Peregrina.

" No," answered Harriet, much to Peregrina's comfort, " I know nothing of that; but I think it is very fine to be invited here to be insulted."

" Less high language if you please, madam," said Lady Cottisbrooke.

" Yes," said the eldest miss, " Harriet can be as violent as any body when she herself

herself is affronted; but every body else must put up with all sorts of affronts."

"*You* have no cause to be so great, sister," answered the second miss, " for what Lady Almerina says is very true—she is very right; for you know you told me yourself, and our servant heard you, that you could easily *cajole*—yes, that was your expression—you could easily *cajole* Lady Almerina into a passion for the marquis, and then Lord Cottisbrooke was your own—and you were trying how well Assington, Earl of Cottisbrooke, would sound for your eldest son's style, when his father was dead."

Lady Cottisbrooke said this was really insufferable, to quarrel with her family, and between themselves too; but they would not desist.

Miss Assington reproached Harriet with having said, she wished Courtland might fall

fall in the next service he was sent on, as she then would try for Edward Bergholt.

This called up Marianne, who, defeated and detected as she had been, could not forbear coloring with rage at this new information; and now interrogated Harriet as to the truth of what she had heard.

“ There,” said Lady Almerina, “ see how warmly Marianne takes it up. I thought what all her languishing and watching Edward meant.”

“ *My languishing?* madam,” retorted Marianne. “ If I *watched Edward*, as you call him, it was to see how he escaped the arts of some other people.”

“ Say whom you mean, dear Marianne,” said Lady Cottisbrooke; “ it is illiberal to use such language.”

“ Why, I mean, Lady Cottisbrooke—”
said

said she in such a fury, that she could get no farther.

“ *Me?*” repeated her ladyship laughing.

“ No, not *you*, but your mean, artful dependent, Miss Lamorne, who has most artfully and most basely been representing me to Sir Edward as—as—as—”

“ As what, my dear?” said Lady Cottisbrooke.

“ Why she told Sir Edward I was in love with him.”

“ Then I fancy,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, with an arch smile, “ she said no more than is too true; and I should have thought, from what I had observed, that you would have thanked her.”

“ What have you observed, madam?” was uttered by the four ladies militant, but

but with very different emphasis and meaning.

“ Miss Lamorne is going to speak,” said Lady Cottisbrooke; “ hear her first, and I will tell you.”

“ I forbear,” said Peregrina, “ to justify myself, because it would be taking a cruel advantage of a weakness, perhaps it is only my humble station exempts me from. But unless Miss Marianne Affington recalls her injurious expressions towards me, I shall beg that Sir Edward may be appealed to.”

“ And Hamilton, too,” said Lady Almerina, who had no pleasure equal to that of stirring up the storm.

“ No, no,” said Lady Cottisbrooke, “ do not make the men witnesses of this silly business.”

“ Then

“ Then I insist,” said Peregrina warmly, “ on Miss Marianne’s producing the note I wrote to her just before I went out, or on her acquitting me.”

“ I—I—I—” said Marianne, searching her pockets—“ the note?—O, I destroyed it.”

“ Then permit me, madam,” said Peregrina, “ to shew Lady Cottisbrooke, for I would not degrade you too far, the rough copy of it, which I kept for my own justification.”

She gave the paper to her friend, who read it aloud. No one could doubt its import—Harriet led the way in contemptuous language; the rest followed, and Lady Cottisbrooke then said, that judging all by her own observation, she thought the whole party of disputants, especially the three sisters, ought to extend mutual forgiveness towards each other on the plea of

of general error. She had already recommended to Lady Almerina and Miss Assington lenity towards each other's failings. She wished Miss Harriet to believe what she could aver to be the truth, that Courtland's sentiments for her were unchanged, and that if she had not experienced from him, while at Margate, those attentions she had a claim to, it was solely to be attributed to her own conduct, which had been unequivocally discouraging. Marianne she gently admonished to be more on her guard in divulging her sentiments ; but in a manner as firm as her thorough good breeding would permit, she warned all the party against revenging their own mistakes of conduct by any reflections on Miss Lamorne, whom her ladyship declared she should never scruple to defend to the utmost extent of truth and justice.

A servant just then opened the door, to say the carriage was driving up : the rich ladies rose, but Lady Almerina would not ;
they

they stiffly thanked Lady Cottisbrooke for her civilities—she expressed her regret at their hasty departure, and advised them to change their mind; they hesitated, and looked at each other---the two eldest seemed propitious; but Marianne, with confusion in her countenance, urged them to be gone, and they again moved. Lady Cottisbrooke begged them only to wait till the gentlemen were informed they were going; but they declining even this acquiescence, she promised Harriet that Hamilton would see her immediately on his reaching town, enquired how long they should remain there before they went to Cheltenham, and wishing them a pleasant journey, allowed them to depart. They could not bow their spirits or their knees to take notice of Peregrina; and they unfortunately lost, by being out of hearing, the impromptu of Lady Almerina's wit, who bade adieu to *the Miss Moneybags*.

Thus ended one of those unpleasant
stayings.

play-ing-bouts, by which those, who have it in their power to amuse, are compelled periodically to purchase temporary quiet.—Lady Cottisbrooke, till now, had had no opportunity of judging of the real temper of the Assingtons;—for in the whirl of London all asperities are lost;—and it was chiefly for the purpose of better acquaintance, that she had given them the invitation. The young heiresses, like magpies in a field, were seldom seen separated: this had given her a favorable impression of their *harmony*; but when she saw that each was a spy on the others, and witnessed their petty strifes and emulations, she could not give so flattering a construction to that which originated only in a fear of being neglected or outwitted.

She therefore, though hurt at the manner in which they had quitted her house, and somewhat anxious on her dear Hamilton's account, saw them depart without regret, while poor Peregina felt most deeply

their unkindness towards her, and was earnest to acquit herself to Lady Cottisbrooke ; but both she and Lady Almerina, who in her hatred to the Assingtons forgot for a moment that she bore Miss Lamorne, quieted her fears by the most satisfactory acquittal.

Captain Courtland and Sir Edward were to set out at day-break the next morning. The family dined together : Lady Almerina was *really civil* to Lord Cottisbrooke ; Sir Edward was uncommonly gloomy ; and Hamilton joined his brother and Lady Almerina, more warmly than his mother wished, in ridicule and censure of the Assingtons. It was in vain that she palliated their faults : justice was against them ; and self-interest was a stranger to the breast of Courtland.

A walk was proposed in the evening.—Lady Cottisbrooke had letters to write ; and Sir Edward declined the party. Finding

ing the wind unpleasant on the pier, they strolled towards St. Peter's; and Lady Essex having in her way picked up her usual dancing-partner, and Lady Almerina thinking it perhaps prudent to take care of the earl, Hamilton and Peregrina were of course thrown together, not much to the dissatisfaction of either.

Confirmed, by the event of the morning, in her idea respecting Ami Bonange, when Courtland again expressed his regret that he must quit England, she replied, "But you will still write to me?"

He paused for a moment, and then answered, "Undoubtedly, if I have your permission."

"That you cannot question," said she, smiling.—"But how am I to direct to you?"

"I will give you the agent's address, and he will forward your letters."

K 2

"But

“ But by what name shall I direct ? ”

“ O ! by my own,” he answered.—“ There can be no danger : you can contrive to put your letters in at Hall’s yourself, in your walks ; and I will take care nobody shall know my hand.”

This point being settled, to avoid observation she joined Lady Essex.

At the next opportunity he begged, as the greatest favor she could confer, to know with what sentiments he left her.

“ You ought to know me, by this time, so well, to ask,” she answered.—“ Believe me, you have all my esteem, my friendship, and my gratitude :—and ——

“ More I do not ask,” he replied, interrupting her —“ Preserve such sentiments for me till I return.”

A re-

A reverted look from Lady Almerina made him cautious. They spoke no more on this subject. Adieu passed after supper; and, on the part of the mother and sister, were most afflicting.—The next morning the two gentlemen departed, and Peregrina felt, though she was forced to conceal it, that Ami Bonange had a deep interest in her broken rest, and low spirits when she arose.

Three days passed in peace, rendered doubly valuable by the late domestic storm. Lady Cottisbrooke, indeed, felt too deeply for her youngest son's situation, to be happy; but Lady Essex seemed to have forgotten how recently he had departed; and Lady Almerina, in her assiduity towards her lover, had buried her recollections and resentments. Peregrina, more than ever, wished for a letter from Ami Bonange; and she was at this time gratified. The same style of admonition, and not all of it intelligible, was continued. She was told, that

the uncommon merit of her conduct had still farther increased the friendship she so profited by ; but the letter contained not the smallest allusion to the recent separation. This she attributed to proper caution ; and she determined to proceed on the same plan.

One of the least perspicuous passages was this :—“ *Danger awaits you ; but fear not : I shall be on the watch.—You are beloved by many, more particularly by two ; still more laudably by one.—One of two will bring you into jeopardy ; the other may distress you.—I can see no farther at present.*”

Courtland had left with her his agent's address, but had dispensed with her making use of it till he could give her some intelligence as to the destination of his regiment : she therefore had it not in her power to beg any light on this mystery.

CHAP. XVI.

IT was now the second week in August; and Peregrina, when she accompanied Lady Essex to the sea, on her bathing mornings, had lately seen at Surflen's an elderly lady, whose face was new to her, but whose appearance was above the common rank, and whose manners were remarkably prepossessing. While waiting for Lady Essex's return, Peregrina often sat down to the piano-forte in the room, and this lady frequently chatted with her on the topic of music, on the beauty of the sea-view, and the general landscape of the island.

This lady too waited for a friend, whom Peregrina felt an idle wish to see. She was soon gratified: the bathing lady one morning appeared, and Peregrina was as much

pleased with her as with her former acquaintance. She seemed in ill health, was very much fatigued, and sat in the room without appearing to notice any one but her friend. Her person was emaciated; her features retained vestiges of beauty, which it was evident sickness, rather than years, had impaired: there was an interesting melancholy about her; and Peregrina felt sorry, when she saw the two ladies drive off in a very handsome but unemblazoned post-chaise.

She enquired who these ladies were, and learnt that the name of the elder was **Halnaby**, and of the younger **Birron**. They were supposed to be mother and daughter, and were said to be widows: they lived in **Hawley-square**, but were never in public.

Again and again Peregrina saw these interesting ladies; and it was soon evident that the elder had mentioned her favorably to the younger, who, mending a little in her

her health, took notice of her with the most encouraging affability. They now met at church in the miscellaneous group of the chancel, and occasionally in their walks ; and Peregrina's head was so full of Mrs. Halnaby and Mrs. *Birron*, that Lady Cottisbrooke became curious to see them ; and introducing herself, they soon grew sociable, and came to visiting terms..

The pleasure Peregrina promised herself, and derived from this new connexion, was superior to any she had felt from transient friendships ; but her attention was soon called off to another object. She received a letter in an unknown hand, signed Ami Bonange ; and, with inexpressible distress, she learnt from it that her faithful monitor was so ill as to be unable to write with his own hand ; that he apprehended his life to be in imminent danger, and begged earnestly to see her at the Fountain at Canterbury, if she could get there without alarming the family.

It was almost impossible for her to recollect what she ought to do. If Courtland was in such danger, surely his mother should have been informed of it.—Why was he still at Canterbury?—How could he expect her to come to him?—She was distracted with her doubts and fears, but very unwilling to neglect his request, or to betray the important secret. She determined, at length, that it was impossible for her to comply, and that she would trust to Lady Cottisbrooke's hearing this disagreeable news, by some other channel.

She could not, however, be easy: she thought, with the sincerest grief, of losing Ami Bonange; and she thought herself ungrateful in omitting the only mark of gratitude it was in her power to bestow: but no possibility of getting to Canterbury appeared till the evening, when Mrs. Halnaby and Mrs. Birron joined Lady Cottisbrooke on the pier, and accidentally asked Miss Lamorne if she would the next morning favor

favor them with her company to Canterbury, whither they were going on business. She gladly accepted the offer, sanctioned by Lady Cottisbrooke's approbation, and the hour was fixed.

She was not without scruples as to the propriety of her acquiescence, but she hoped she could easily reconcile her prudence to the necessity, as the ladies had themselves said they should put up their carriage, and take a short dinner, at the very inn she was directed to.

Ah ! Peregrina, child of misfortune ! sport of chance ! but ever favorite of the worthy ! deserted by thy natural protectors, fostered by strangers ! how near art thou now to the discovery of thy affectionate parent, and to a situation that will abundantly repay thee for all thy troubles ? --- Without doubt, the elder lady will not always persist in calling the younger *Joanna* : --- thou wilt catch the name of *Byram*, not

Birron, as ignorant tongues have taught thee :---thou wilt learn thy story, and sink in rapture on the bosom of thy saint-like mother.

The anxiety of her mind, respecting Courtland, kept Peregrina waking till after sun-rise, when dropping into a slumber, she dreamt of all things horrible, woke in a fright, and rose in perturbation.

The time appointed for her setting out was not till after the arrival of the post; and by it she had another letter from Ami Bonange, directed, to her infinite consolation, by his own hand. With her usual circumspection, she retired to read it; and it contained the following valuable intelligence, dated from Canterbury :

“ It is my earnest prayer that this may not come too late:---I am almost tempted to be my own ambassador. Be cautious, Peregrina ! On no account come towards this

this city for some days ; or, if you do, let it be in company you can trust.

“ I have discovered a most infernal scheme, in which C—— is the principal agent. His servant, who is his jackall, has been fool enough to confide his master’s secrets.—His visit to his mother was made with no other view than to get access to you. The direction of your letters to me has been remarked :—my signature has been used to entrap you ; and you are to be prevailed on, under pretence of my dangerous illness, to be at the Fountain in this city to-day.

“ Come not ! Stir not, I beseech you ! —But lest you should, in the great humanity I know you to possess, have set out on this charitable expedition, I will beat the road all the morning, to meet, to warn, to save you.

“ I need

"I need not tell you what C——'s views are. His character is well known. His conduct will soon shew you, that, tho' he is not at hostilities with vice, he has no affection for shame.—I do not say, Trust no one; 'tis a misanthropic caution; but rely on him, who is for ever

Your most faithful

AMI BONANGE."

What was now to be done was not difficult to decide. Peregrina excused herself to her friends on the plea of indisposition; and her countenance bore the same tidings to Lady Cottisbrooke, who approved her declining the jaunt.—But against whom was she to guard? The initial which Ami Bonange had used as a designation, was none; for it might mean Lord Cottisbrooke or Captain Courtland. His lordship she ever thought ill of; but it was painful to her to admit a degrading thought of his brother.—Yet, had he not deceived her?

Had

Had he not passed on her for Ami Bonange?
---It must be Courtland she was to guard
against.

Under pretence of her illness, she staid within, and confined herself above stairs almost all day. The ladies only were at home; and good-natured Lady Effex persisted in sharing her solitude; and though it was little in her power to amuse, she was useful in sometimes diverting Peregrina's thoughts.

At the supper-hour, they went down together. The earl only was in the parlor, and seemed newly arrived, and in deep thought. He abruptly asked his sister, if any letters had come by the morning's post. She not being able to tell him, Peregrina embraced the opportunity, and said, "It brought one for me, my lord."---"O! yes, I remember," said Lady Effex, "my mother said she feared it brought you bad news."---"It was indeed bad news," said Pere-

Peregrina ; " the worst in the world. It told me I had a secret enemy ! "

" But," said Lord Cottisbrooke, " perhaps it told you how to guard against that enemy."---His assumed *sang froid* could not entirely deceive her. She shot at random; when she answered, " Yes, my lord, and how to expose that enemy ; which I shall not fail to do."

She thought he changed countenance.---Lady Cottisbrooke and Lady Almerina came in from a moon-light stroll on the cliff; and they sat down to supper, from which Miss Lamorne soon retired.

The first news she heard the next morning was, that the earl had given up his intention of remaining in England, and meant to rejoin his tutor, who had waited for him till the last moment.---He had set off for London before the family met for breakfast ; and thus Peregrina was at once confirmed

confirmed in her surmise, and released from her danger. Lady Cottisbrooke regretted, Lady Almerina lamented, his sudden whim; but Peregrina could not join either.

She wrote immediately, in those terms her sense of gratitude prompted, to Ami Bonange. Her curiosity strongly urged her to enquire of him, what had incited Lord Cottisbrooke to take so much trouble for the paltry purpose of access to her; but the respect she entertained for her friend, in his mysterious character, restrained her.

CHAP. XVII.

BUT there was another circumstance, not much connected with her narrow escape from the earl, that claimed her attention, and gave her considerable uneasiness. She doubted again, whether she were correct in her guess respecting *her good genius*; and the next morning relieved her, but in the most distressing way, from this suspense; for it brought her a letter, directed in a hand that could not be suspected, but which the contents and signature proved to be from Courtland. He dated from London, and wrote as follows :

“ I AM, I believe, the worst scribe in the world; nor can I even boast the ability to tell my own story in my own way.---Where I feel most, I can say the least; and when

when my heart is at the fullest, it is the least given to overflow. Suffer me, therefore, my dearest madam, to be incoherent and unintelligible; for, were I to seek for language, I perhaps should not only puzzle you, but myself.

“ My acquaintance with you is not, I confess, of a standing that gives me any claim to your regard; but, as I have not talents for deceit, I trust you will give me credit, when I assure you that, however awkwardly I may appear on paper, it will be my *misfortune* if I offend you.

“ You have ever, my dear madam, behaved towards me in a way that demonstrated your intrinsic excellence. I had the happiness to be appointed, by some unknown friend, to the guardianship of you, on an interesting occasion; and, though I could plead no active interposition for you, you have generously treated me as one you could rely on. My small services are abundantly

abundantly overpaid by this inestimable gratification. Do not therefore imagine that I mean covertly to claim, what it is my business to supplicate.

“ You have seen the woman destined, by my mother’s anxiety for my success in the world, and the scantiness of my paternal inheritance, to be my wife. It cannot surprise you, if I confess myself utterly unattached to her: I *was* only *indifferent*: I am *now* decidedly *averse*; and I think my mother is almost as much disgusted with the specimens she has had of her disposition, as I am, and every body must be, who has ever lived under the same roof with her.

“ I am aware of the difficulties of my situation: I know well, that I have to cut my way through the world; but provided for, as I am, by an honorable profession, I do not shrink from the duty of a man; nor will I ever, against the dictates of my heart
and

and its purest affections, sell myself to domestic misery. After this declaration, I need not add, that from this moment I disclaim all intention of marrying Harriet Assington.

“ It would be unpardonable presumption to say I have formed any other intention : I mean only to submit my wishes to your judgment, and to tell you, in the most respectful manner I am capable, that my whole happiness depends on you ; and though I have, I confess, very little to invite you to, I can shield you from want when I die ; and, while I live, it shall be my sole study to render you happy.

“ Can you then, my dearest madam, relinquish the more flattering prospects that court your eye ? Can you be deaf to the solicitations of the many, who I know seriously admire you, to become a poor soldier’s wife ? — The expression looks presumptuous : I could almost erase it ; but

it

it speaks the untaught language of my heart.—It is my meaning, however it might be recommended by more circuitous phrase,

“ In admiration of you on my first acquaintance, I wrote to my brother, concerning you, in a style that made my disinterestedness suspected : he has not only never discouraged my views, but he has frequently blamed me for my inactivity.

“ I rely, not only on my mother’s affection for me, but on her good sense, that ~~she~~ will immediately see the propriety, and, I may add, *advantage* of her acquiescence. I am confident of her regard for you ; and from some hints she has lately dropt, I have good reason to believe that, though she might think a feigned opposition necessary to acquit her to Harriet, whom, on my honor, I am no way engaged to, she would ultimately be delighted with claiming you as her daughter. I intreat you not to let scruples on this point ruin my hopes.

“ Our

“ Our embarkation is deferred for two or three weeks. I write by this post to my mother, but not on this subject. Unless you are irreconcileably offended at this address, I shall live in the hope of your fulfilling your promise, by writing to me — At present, I can give no other address than to George’s coffee-house, Hamarket; but you may depend on it, that whatever you may write will safely meet, and confer a lasting obligation on, madam,

Your most devoted humble servant,
HAMILTON COURTLAND.”

Respectful as was the style of this letter, and flattering as was the prospect it offered her, Peregrina could not rest easy under the errors its contents were founded on. She saw that an accidental combination of circumstances had deceived her; and she feared that, as Courland was ignorant of her mistake, he must, however his delicacy might suppress it, think contemptuously of her for her facility. She thought with pain

of the idea his brother must conceive of her, if, in their confidential correspondence, he learnt what had been her conduct; and that it should be a secret from him, she could not hope, since she could not doubt that it was Courtland's want of reserve that had procured her the honor of his lordship's attention. Regarding, therefore, the business on which he had written as only a secondary consideration, she answered his letter by a brief acknowledgment of his condescension; assured him that, whatever encouragement he had discovered in her deportment, was the consequence of a mistake; and that, though she should never forget her many obligations to him, or think of him but with esteem, she must beg he would be for ever silent on the subject of his letter.

Her spirits were hurt by this awkward affair, of which she immediately wrote a detail to Ami Bonange, begging his sanction for the ease of her conscience. A re-

turn,

turn, earlier than the post, gratified and surprised her. A special messenger, who could answer no question, brought it from one of the hotels. It came while the family were sitting at supper, and Peregrina saw Lady Cottisbrooke look a little doubtfully, and Lady Almerina penetratingly, at her, as she put it unopened into her pocket. The matter seemed, however, to make no farther impression. The letter contained expressions of enthusiastic approbation.— She and Lady Essex met Mrs. *Birron* in the morning; they had an agreeable walk together; and Peregrina almost forgot how she had been distressed.

Lady Cottisbrooke was from home the greater part of the next day. Sir Edward Bergholt, who had returned to his boarding-house, and seemed again relapsing into oddity, called early in the forenoon; and immediately as he was gone, Lady Almerina appeared all business and agitation. Having a maid-servant purposely to wait on

her, it was seldom her custom to combat her habit of indolence by activity: she would ring for a servant to pick up a book, if she dropped it, or to take off her clogs: she never performed any other part in her dressing, than that of being still; but this day she was uncommonly brisk: she seemed ransacking her drawers, and putting all things either into great order or confusion. Her temper was so affected by her business, that it was dangerous to have occasion to speak to her; and, as mistress of the house in Lady Cottisbrooke's absence, she was without bounds a tyrant.

It entered Peregrina's imagination, tho' she had scarcely ground for the conjecture, that an elopement was in agitation; but who was to be the partner of her ladyship's flight was not easy to divine, except it were Sir Edward; and against this, unless he was indeed very crazy, or the parties were more than ordinarily subtle, every thing she recollectec militated: but Peregrina had

had seen craft till she had learnt to be suspicious.

What passed in her mind, she kept profoundly a secret. She spent the evening with Lady Essex at Mrs. Halnaby's, whither Lady Almerina did not chuse to accompany them ; and at her return was more grieved than surprised, to find Lady Cottisbrooke in excessive perturbation, writing letters, and dispatching servants in quest of Lady Almerina, who had walked out in the evening with her maid, and was not now to be found.

The enquiries made in the town, and Peregrina's previous observations, quieted Lady Cottisbrooke's fears that some accident might have befallen the young lady ; and the information of one of the lower servants soon gave some light into the mystery, and cleared Sir Edward in Peregrina's opinion : for it was now unquestionable that Lady Almerina had, even at the time

when she appeared most attached to Lord Cottisbrooke, maintained a clandestine correspondence with her slender friend the marquis.

Lady Cottisbrooke had, it must be confessed, more than a mother's share of maternal anxiety ; and Peregrina, who loved her little less than if she had been her parent, was extremely hurt at this new and very serious vexation : but she soon perceived that her ladyship was not inclined to view it on its most gloomy side, and that though, out of a principle of charity, she forbore invective against the fugitive, it was a climax of her character that did not at all astonish her. She appeared more dejected by the consequent reflection this accident suggested on the little comfort she derived from her children : her eldest son, she observed, was now again unsettled, and she feared he might suffer by this early disappointment : she lamented the necessity of her younger son's exposing himself, perhaps through

through life, to its greatest dangers, to compensate for his small provision; but there seemed some latent anxiety, respecting him, that affected her still more: she bewailed Lady Essex's *ill health*; for of her intellectual infirmities she never spoke; and addressing herself affectionately to Peregrina, she said, " You must, my dear, reconcile me to these afflictions, by supposing yourself one of my children, and by administering to me that comfort which it is not in their power to bestow.—You see how Lady Almerina has rewarded me; but I know you are not like her."

An address so melancholy, and expressions of affection so cordial, Peregrina could answer only by tears,—tears which flowed so abundantly for the sorrows of this exemplary parent, that they prevented her noticing a letter, which one of the upper servants brought in and delivered to his lady, as found by one of the house-maids on Lady Almerina's dressing table.

L 3

Lady

Lady Cottisbrooke glanced over the contents in silence, and then, with a significant smile, shewed the paper to Miss Lamorne. It was not an apology for, or a justification of, her own conduct ; but it was a general invective against the family she had quitted, and Miss Lamorne in particular, who was said to have laid traps for both Lady Cottisbrooke's sons, and whose art was represented as unfathomably dangerous ; and it concluded with a *modest* hope that when the writer should be, as a few hours must render her, *allied to the blood-royal*, even Miss Lamorne would treat, with rather more respect, than she had hitherto done, her ladyship's most humble, most obedient, &c. &c.

The excess of this accusation wholly defeated its malignity ; for Lady Cottisbrooke set it all down to the account of malice, and, only smiling at the vain attempt to ruin innocence, she turned her thoughts to the

the duties she had to discharge towards her adult ward; and having already done all in her power to discover where she was, she now wrote to the only relation the young lady had, an aunt, who lived obscurely and on a small income,—for which good reasons she was most devoutly hated by her niece. Her ladyship next wrote to Lord Cottisbrooke, to tell him of his loss,—and to Captain Courtland, as entitled to this attention from her,—and then seemed perfectly easy about Lady Almerina Delaford.

But the next morning brought Courtland himself, whose loco-motive propensities always saved him the trouble of apologising for a sudden intrusion. He seemed diverted at Lady Almerina's elopement;—but to laugh, was not the purpose for which he returned: he came, the first moment he could steal from London, to urge the purport of his letter to Miss Lamorne; and he embraced the first opportunity of adding to

his written energy all the force that a tongue, which could not frame itself to a falsity, and language that love made eloquent, could give it; and Peregrina had no way to stop his vehemence, but by requesting a truce for that day and the next.

CHAP. XVIII.

IN the evening, when rather a large party of Lady Cottisbrooke's acquaintance were with her, some engaged in cards, others in conversation, the rattle of a carriage was heard; a clergyman alighted at the door from a postchaise, and handed out a lady who was instantly recognised as Lady Almerina. "I will not see her," said Lady Cottisbrooke; "I am too angry to trust myself." The servants had then orders to shew Lady Almerina into the breakfast parlor; and a message came from her escort, requesting to speak with Lady Cottisbrooke. She went into another room with him, taking Miss Lamorne with her, and learnt from the stranger that he was chaplain to the Marquis's father, that he had, in company with the Duke, been for-

tunate enough to overtake the young couple before they reached London ; that the Marquis had given up the lady without reluctance ; and it was hoped would now fulfil the more honorable engagement he had, he was convinced, been *persuaded* to break. He had the satisfaction of restoring the young lady safe, and was Lady Cottisbrooke's most obedient.

Lady Almerina wrote a note to Lady Cottisbrooke, begging to see her. It was answered only by these words : " Not unless you can prevail on Miss Lamorne to intercede for you." This was a condition too revolting to be easily acceded to ; and Peregrina herself begged it might be dispensed with, but Lady Cottisbrooke was determined thus to avenge her ; and when Lady Almerina saw her supper sent to her in the breakfast parlor, and found solitary confinement was to be her punishment, she so far condescended, as to request an audience of Miss Lamorne, who, far more moved

moved than the culprit, attended her with quivering lips and glistening eyes.

With no strength of argument, but with abundance of reiteration, she begged Peregrina to intercede with Lady Cottisbrooke, not only to admit her again to her favor, but, which still more astonished Peregrina, to conceal from Lord Cottisbrooke the folly she had been guilty of. Peregrina promised to report all she had said; but abhorring deceit, she could not give her any hope that Lord Cottisbrooke would not be informed of what had happened, as his mother had already written to him. This was a stroke of precipitation the young lady seemed not prepared for; and her tears flowed abundantly. Peregrina gave her what consolation she could, in assuring her that her future conduct might restore her to favor. She prevailed on Lady Cottisbrooke to see her before she went to her rest, and then retired to her own, more disposed to meditate on the merit of Hamilton Court-

land, than on the foibles of Lady Almerina.

It was not so easy, as it at first appeared, to decide on the part she had to pursue. She had every reason to believe Lady Cottisbrooke well disposed towards her; and it was not impossible, that, indulgent as she was to her young people, she might in some cases overlook a want of money. Of Hamilton's regard, she could not doubt: his integrity had every internal evidence; and to his merit and recommendations her own opinion bore witness. She could not plead love enough to excuse an error of judgement; but she was far from being indifferent to his welfare and happiness, and having for some time, however erroneously, fancied him her peculiar friend, she had acquired a degree of attachment to him, that a little encouragement from circumstances might soon have animated into love. She was convinced that the possession of great wealth could not only never render him

him happy, but would never save him from a broken heart, should he be unfortunate in his marriage.

Having revolved in her mind these considerations, she saw there was nothing which obliged her to dismiss Captain Courtland's proposal indignantly; but a little farther meditation convinced her that it was not to be accepted without caution. It was just probable, that Lady Cottisbrooke might, to gratify her son, give up her requisition of riches with his wife;—it was much more probable, that he had flattered himself into this idea; and if she did dispense with wealth, it might be for the advantage of connection. Alas! what advantage could a connection with Peregrina Lamorne offer to any one?

Still, let Lady Cottisbrooke be ever so propitious, was it a moral action, by a precipitate engagement, to prevent Courtland's reaping those benefits which improved acquaintance

quaintance with the world, and the passing of a few years, might offer to him? She knew herself, even when boasting the best of her descent, to be an unrecognised branch of a family: this, surely was not an eligible match for Courtland: his mother never could approve her, unless she deceived her. After much thought, therefore, she determined to make Lady Cottisbrooke acquainted with her son's partiality; and if she found she did not quite disapprove it, to tell her that there was a mystery belonging to her which she dared not reveal.

It was Lady Cottisbrooke's practice to walk alone on the cliff opposite her house every morning, as soon as she was out of her chamber; and Peregrina having, from her window, seen her betake herself thither, followed her, and respectfully begged she might be allowed to partake her walk.

“Certainly, my love, but you will find me very dull company. That untoward young woman,

woman, Lady Almerina, has kept me waking all night—I scarcely know what I had best do with her."

" She seems so penitent for her fault, madam, that I hope she will now think seriously, and improve by it."

" She is penitent, I have no doubt, for her *failure*; but as for true virtuous repentance, she has, I am confident, none of it in her nature. No, my dear, I have long watched her; and if it were only for her conduct towards you, I should be hopeless of her. What could be more malicious than the letter she left?"

" True, madam, it indicated no good will to me, but I must in part acquit her ladyship; for strange as it may appear, it is my business, in seeking you this morning in private, to confess to you that there is more reason—there is some flight ground—there is just a—"

" My

“ My dear, why do you hesitate ? ” said Lady Cottisbrooke, stopping—“ You, I am confident, can have nothing to blush for.”

“ No, indeed,” she answered ; “ I believe—I hope—nay, I may call Heaven to witness the innocence of my intentions, though I have been unfortunate.”

“ How *unfortunate* ? ” asked her ladyship eagerly.

Peregrina then, with the utmost caution, and in a way that did not at all declare to what lengths her youngest son had gone, told her she could no longer, in honor, conceal from her her apprehension, which perhaps might have no deeper foundation than in her vanity and presumption, that Captain Courtland’s generous friendship for her might weaken his more justifiable attachments.

“ I am

“ I am not surprised at this,” said her ladyship drily.

“ But you *must* be offended at it, madam; and it is on that persuasion that I come to intreat you to do with me whatever will most conduce to your peace of mind.”

“ You are a generous girl indeed; but why *must* I be offended?”

“ Because I am poor and obscure.”

“ That may be a reason why I cannot *approve you as a daughter*, but surely it can be none why I should be *angry with you*.— You, poor thing! are not to blame for being captivating; as little am I inclined to rail at you for being elegant and honest; the circumstance I am the most likely to quarrel at is, that Hamilton cannot afford to marry a wife without a fortune, and I have not a fortune to give him; for at my death

death Cottisbrooke has my jointure, and Ham has very little more, I assure you, than his bare pay, which he could not live on."

" But are you then, madam, not offended with me ?"

" Not at all, my dear. If I had not been satisfied I might trust you, I should not have been as easy as I have been; but I thought well of you the first moment I saw you, and my opinion has ever since that time been improving. I saw you the other night receive a letter; and the confusion of your countenance made me suspect it was from Hamilton; but I knew Peregrina Lamorne could have no disguises with me; and I was certain I should hear of it."

" That letter, on my honor, was not from Captain Courtland. It was from a friend I never saw, but of whose disinter-

ested

rested attachment I have the highest proofs, though I own I am not at liberty to reveal them."

" You have my highest confidence, my dear; but with respect to my son, tell me, has he not declared himself?"

" He has."

" And what answer did you give him?"

" I requested him for ever to be silent on the subject; and I have since represented to him the madness of his wish; but he urged me so violently, that I was forced to request till night to consider on it."

" Well! but then you must next tell me how you stand affected towards him?"

" I can never be indifferent to any one of a family who have treated me with so much

much humanity—besides, Captain Courtland has conferred particular obligations on me, which I think I should very ill requite, and as ungratefully should I repay your ladyship's kindnesses, were I to place him in a situation that must embarrass him, perhaps for life."

" You are a very good girl, and a very prudent girl. It would certainly be very hazardous for him to engage himself; for though, while I live, I could find his family a comfortable home, that is far from a certainty. I wished him to marry Harriet Affington, because her large fortune would have set him out in the world comfortably and respectably; but really while she was here she behaved so oddly, that I cannot blame his indifference to her. It would, I confess, distress me extremely to see him in difficulties I could not relieve; but I would rather break my heart than oppose him. I wish somebody would give thee ten thousand pounds, my Peregrina; for

for I am afraid, without it, whatever Courtland may talk of the power of love, you will find yourselves very much straitened on all sides; but I beg in your decision you will put me out of the question. I have told you how little I can contribute to your comfort, and you know my sentiments. If you choose to come together, I will do my utmost for you; for I have now no wish but for my children's happiness. I could do, perhaps, without some of the conveniences I enjoy; and readily would I part with them for a gratification so far superior: only think of yourselves when I am gone. Do not imagine, my love, that in thus candidly telling you my opinion, I mean any slight to you---I value you most highly---as for pedigree, I care not for it---as for money, I only wish we could do without it, or that I had it for you."

Lady Essex now joining them, the conversation ended, and left Peregrina's heart
over-

overflowing with love and gratitude towards Lady Cottisbrooke.

But her ladyship's candor and kindness had, on the mind of her dependent, an effect far more forcible than the most vehement prohibition. In the simplicity of her heart, she weighed no contingencies, she calculated no chances: she judged only from what she saw; and she determined that, however eligible and honorable the connexion might be to her, it must be disadvantageous to those she was most indebted to, and therefore was to be rejected by any person making the smallest claim to gratitude or moral rectitude.

In this disposition of mind (and who shall say, not somewhat doubting her own steadiness, when a flattering prospect was offered of at least casting her cares on another, to remain content in the chearless wild of dependence?) she resolved, without waiting

the expiration of her truce, to inform Captain Courtland of his fate.

She went down to the sea with Lady Essex. *Mrs. Birron* was there without her friend, and, though nearly ready to depart, proposed waiting Lady Essex's return, that they might walk together.

Peregrina's spirits were not, this morning, equal to her usual amusement: she attempted to touch the piano forte, but it was all discord. *Mrs. Birron* seemed to grow interested in her looks; and she was forced to assume cheerfulness, lest she might excite curiosity. But whether *Mrs. Birron* was much accustomed to read the index of the mind, or only kindly commiserating, Peregrina was unable to judge; but her language and her attentions shewed she had penetration.

She this morning so far unbosomed herself as to say, she, by experience, knew how

how far all bodily suffering was surpassed by the world's vexations; and catching Peregrina's hand, when Lady Essex was at a distance playing with her dog, she said, " Ah, Miss Lamorne! I have a daughter to whom I looked for the reward of a stormy life. She fails my hopes: she adds to my afflictions.—Were she like you!—I could almost wish I had never seen you; for I shall go home more discontented than ever. The elegant folly I see here, excites in me no sentiment of humiliation for my daughter.—I could bear with her external defects.—But you seem the creature framed to my wishes,—and I am wicked enough to ask, Why were *you* not my daughter?"

Peregrina, fearing to increase both her own and her friend's dejection, endeavored to think lightly of her words; but they made an indelible impression on her mind, and she felt that she was connected with society by one more link—that of friend-
ship

ship and affection for this excellent, interesting woman.

She met Courtland as she went into the house, and begged to speak to him at his first leisure. He had no procrastination about him at any time ; and now he could brook no delay. With artificial firmness, she told him the result of her meditations, and forcibly represented the embarrassment her acquiescence in his views must produce. He heard her impatiently, and shut his ears against conviction : he talked, lover-like, of the omnipotence of love against all evils : he quoted an instance or two, where indiscretion had been successful : he tried to extort from her a promise of waiting better days ; but this, as perhaps it might prevent the advancement of his fortune in the interim, she declined, believing that without a promise, if he were steady and events propitious, it would remain in his power to claim her : he vowed eternal constancy : she declined accepting his vows ; and hav-

ing made this sacrifice to her integrity, she retired to mourn her hard fate in secret.

Lady Cottisbrooke soon sought her, not supposing she had uttered her decision; and her business was not to increase, but to smooth difficulties. Peregrina told her all that had past, and concealed, as far as was in her power, the share her heart had in it; but it was not to be wholly concealed; and nothing prevented her noble friend's giving way to it, but the disinterested fear that this beloved, this estimable girl might, in the fortune of war and the chances of the world, be left unprovided for, to struggle with hardships still greater than those of dependence.

“Till Captain Courtland has thought seriously on this subject,” said Peregrina, half choking with her feelings, “if I had any place to retire to, I would leave you, madam.”

“I would

“ I would rather wish *him* to go ; but I know his temper too well to expect any sacrifice on his part. He is very sanguine : he will not believe you can be inflexible ; but, unless he is very much altered, he will wear off his chagrin by degrees, and flirt with the next pretty woman he meets with ; for Ham, with all his merit, and few young men have more, has a heart generally at every fair one’s service. He has been in love with all my friends’ daughters, by turns, and never been free from some violent passion since he came from school ; so that I cannot think, unless *you* have had the power of fixing him, he is in much danger of dying for love. However, your separation might be of use to both, though I know not how to part from you, even for the short time he will remain, poor fellow ! in England.—Your friend, Mrs. *Birron*, seems to wish for your company : she hinted it to me ; but she is not yet going, and to remain here with her would be as bad almost as being in my house.”

M 2

Peregrina,

Peregrina, young-woman like, felt her pride a little hurt at hearing it suggested that her lover might be fickle, though his fickleness was the most likely means of rendering efficient her generous design. She was not inclined to believe Lady Cottisbrooke right: she had no idea that Hamilton would change his sentiments for her: for Miss Harriet Assington, indeed, they had changed; but it was prudence, not love, that had dictated to him there; and she had too far sported with her good fortune in attacking him. She therefore still wished she could for a short time absent herself, and again urged it.

Lady Cottisbrooke was called away to some morning visitors: she excused Peregrina's appearance, and went alone to receive them. Returning presently, she told the still-weeping girl that if she really, for her own ease, wished to absent herself, there was now a favorable opportunity for it. Mr. and Mrs. Blyford, and their family,

mily, had called to take leave : they were returning to their beautiful seat in Oxfordshire ; and Mrs. Blyford, on the part of her eldest daughter, made it her business to urge a visit from Miss Lamorne, as soon as Lady Cottisbrooke could prevail on herself to part from her. Her ladyship added, that she had so far accepted it, as to say that immediate change of air appeared to her necessary for Miss Lamorne's constitution, to which the sea was not friendly ; and Mrs. Blyford had proposed her returning now with them to Frandiston park : but it still remained an open contract, and she wished Peregrina could come down and settle it.

In the caprice of sorrow, Peregrina, now that she saw it probable she should go, began to repent her having proposed it ; but she soon conquered this weakness, and accepting Mrs. Blyford's kindness, she commissioned Lady Cottisbrooke to excuse her on the plea of indisposition, but to promise,

for her, that she would call at Mrs. Blyford's in the evening, to arrange all preliminaries. She then endeavored, by exertion, to increase her fortitude, and succeeded better than she had expected, comforted by the reflection that she had adhered to her duty; but still, though she had thought on nothing else all the time of dressing, it was impossible to believe Courtland could be fickle.

CHAP. XIX.

Poor Lady Almerina had remained in the dumps, and in disgrace, from the time of her return. She could neither go out, nor see any visitors; and Lady Cottisbrooke's behavior increased her troubles. It was very civil, but so perfectly regular that her heart was evidently out of the question; and there was a mystery about her which none could penetrate, till the family were this day rising from dinner. Captain Courtland was out, so that the party consisted only of ladies; and to them was introduced a little thick-set woman, drest in an antique brocade, a large flapping black hat, a cap of the last century, and with a cloak which, the heat of the weather dispensing with it as a covering, she carried hung upon her arm.

The servant announced the name of *Mrs. Lound*; and Lady Almerina shrieking faintly, seemed anxious only to escape.

“ *Your servant, ladies,*” said the stranger, curtseying in her best style.—“ *Pray dunna let me distract you.*”

“ *No, no, Mrs. Lound, you do not distract us,*” said Lady Cottisbrooke encouragingly. “ *Come, and sit next me.*”

The dame obeyed. “ *I comed, my lady, as soon as iver I could, after your molancholy letter: but our steage was sot off; so I were forced to take, you see, double horse as far as the Lord knows where.*”

“ Well, well, Mrs. Lound, you are come in very good time.—I thought it right to send to you, though I am very sorry to make you a party in this disagreeable business.”

“ *But*

“But pray,” said Mrs. Lound, “which of these smart misses is my great niece? for I have not seen her sin she were a babe in arms.”

“ That is your niece,” said Lady Cotisbrooke, bowing towards Lady Almerina, who could scarcely support her situation.

Mrs. Lound, who was next to her, offered to take her hand, as if, by holding her fast, she could the better investigate her features.

The indignant lady withdrew it, and hastened out of the room.

Miss Lamorne, imagining that, as this Mrs. Lound was a person whose name she had never heard, her business might be private, followed Lady Almerina; and Lady Essex, of course, went with her. With every expression of distress and despair, Lady Almerina beckoned Peregrina

M 5. into

into her apartment, and there disclosed to her the mystery of Mrs. Lound, intreating her most earnestly to interest herself once more for her, with Lady Cottisbrooke, against the fate she saw impending over her devoted head. She stated this Mrs. Lound to be the sister of her grandfather's wife, and a woman of the lowest rank, vulgar and illiterate to the last degree: she said, her grandfather had irreconcileably offended all his family by his marriage, which had nothing but the rustic beauty of his wife to excuse it, and that this woman had scarcely ever been noticed by any of her great relations; that she was, it was true, the only person in the world she was connected with by consanguinity; and that she saw it was Lady Cottisbrooke's intention most cruelly to revenge her juvenile indiscretion, which was nothing more than happened every day, and which, in her idea, merited very little blame, by giving her up to this great abominable aunt.

And,

And, indeed, Lady Almerina's sagacity could not, in this instance, be charged with misleading her ; for, before Peregrina could suggest either hope or consolation, her ladyship was summoned to the parlor to hear her sentence. She intreated her friend to go with her ; and Lady Cottisbrooke in the mildest terms, but with the most hopeless firmness, informed her, that, as she was at *years of discretion*, her authority over her as a ward had ceased, and that, as it was in vain to attempt protecting where there was no power of control, she must beg to decline any farther charge of her, and recommend it to her, as her only surviving relation, to accept of Mrs. Lound's willingness to admit her into her family.

Lady Almerina was furious at the proposition ; nor would her aunt have borne with patience the language her wounded feelings dictated, had she not been flattered by the idea of exhibiting her right ho-

norable relation to the farmers' wives who formed her society, and who sometimes treated her with contempt for her rigid parsimony and *ungenteel* manners; nor was the good lady uninfluenced by the prospect of receiving for her ladyship's board what she knew she could pinch into *a very equitable* compensation. With fondness, still more disgusting than the asperity of her natural deportment, she tried to coax her niece into a willing acquiescence; and finding that fail, she set before the young lady the sacrifice of character she had made, in a way not much calculated to excite liberality of sentiment, or to cheer the sufferer with hopes of lenity.

Lady Almerina, half distracted, took Peregrina's hand, and begged Lady Cottisbrooke to hear her in another room.—There, on her knees, she intreated to be spared the punishment prepared for her; and, making Peregrina join her, she promised

mised the utmost docility, duty, and affection, might she but be permitted to remain, even a prisoner, where she was. She confessed her follies; she vowed a thorough reformation of conduct: she offered to write penitential letters to the marquis's father, and to Lord Cottisbrooke; nay, there was nothing that was mean, that her ladyship's haughty spirit would not have submitted to, rather than have passed a winter on a Kentish farm with her aunt.

Lady Cottisbrooke, aware of the elasticity of hope, would not be too yielding; but having for some time stood out, she at length, after a very sensible and affectionate admonition, consented again to receive the penitent on these conditions:—that the next act of levity, stubbornness, or imprudence, should be punished by *rural exile*; that she, during a few days which it was designed Mrs. Lound should pass at Margate, should conduct herself respectfully

fully towards her ; and that, for the future, she should acknowledge and be kind to her as a relation.

With these terms Lady Almerina joyfully complied. She embraced Lady Cottisbrooke with tears of gratitude, and her intercessor with affection : they rejoined the old lady ; and Peregrina soon after left them, to make her promised call on Mrs. Blyford.

Lady Almerina's distresses had somewhat called off her attention from her own ; but in her solitary walk to Cecil-square, she could not but ruminante on the little good *she* derived from the revolution of events. She was still as dependent as ever : she saw no end of dependence : accidents might separate her from the friends she relied on, and where was she to seek others ? or how was it probable that she could recommend herself ? — *she* who had so little to boast, and

so much to conceal ! Her heart sunk, as she waited for admission at Mr. Blyford's ; for her visit was a preliminary to a separation from Lady Cottisbrooke ; but she thought it a sacrifice due to Courtland's peace ; and she did not hesitate, though she reluctantly yielded.

The family, with whom she was now about to connect herself by intimacy, was one of the most amiable description. It consisted of Mr. Blyford, a man of intellect and education, who carried on an important mercantile concern in London ; Mrs. Blyford, who sunk uncommon endowments of mind and person in the domestic cares of a wife and mother ; and eight sons and daughters, the eldest of whom had not attained her sixteenth year. They were Quakers, but of the most liberal opinions, and seemed so far to have improved on religious diffension, as to extract from it all

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The family, with whom she was now about to connect herself by intimacy, was one of the most amiable description. It consisted of Mr. Blyford, a man of intellect and education, who carried on an important mercantile concern in London ; Mrs. Blyford, who sunk uncommon endowments of mind and person in the domestic cares of a wife and mother ; and eight sons and daughters, the eldest of whom had not attained her sixteenth year. They were Quakers, but of the most liberal opinions, and seemed so far to have improved on religious diffension, as to extract from it all

that was good, with a just rejection of its errors.

Their house in Oxfordshire, where they most resided, was a temple sacred to all the social virtues ; and, even in the heterogeneous dissipation of a bathing-place, their suavity of manners, the decency of their deportment, and the beneficence that marked their footsteps, distinguished them far more than the peculiarity of their simple dress, or their colloquial deviations from practice. It was impossible to see them, without a wish for acquaintance with them : it was as impossible to be acquainted, without loving them ; and if Peregrina *must* be parted from Lady Cottisbrooke, and dear *Mrs. Birren* was otherwise engaged, she thought she could be as tranquil with the Blyfords as with any family ; and tranquillity was all she sought for.

Where

Where on one side there was a sincere desire, and on the other, if not a decided preference, at least an acquiescence, there was not much to settle. Mr. and Mrs. Blyford meant to set out the next day but one; but, for Miss Lamorne's convenience, offered to delay their journey. She, if her going was advisable, wished it to be speedy: the early appointment was therefore no objection; and Martha Blyford, the eldest of the young people, with delight obtained her promise not to fail her.

The regard she involuntarily paid Mrs. Halnaby, and still more *Mrs. Birron*, prompted her, before she turned towards Lady Cottisbrooke's, to call in Hawley-square, to acquaint them with her intended departure. She was not without some hope of obtaining from the younger of these ladies a promise of her correspondence; but all her wishes were defeated, by hearing that they had been suddenly called away at noon,

noon, by some unforeseen accident at home — what it was, the person remaining in the house knew not; but there was no chance of their return.

More disturbed than she herself thought reasonable on such an occasion, she dragged homewards, and found Lady Almerina impatiently expecting her, to receive her reiterated thanks, and to advise with her as to the style of a letter she was manufacturing to appease Lord Cottisbrooke; for still to lose the earl, however little she loved him, was the bitterest part of her punishment.

It was indeed a delicate business to frame such a letter; but what Lady Almerina had written was very passable, and Peregrina advised her rather to make use of her own expressions than to borrow; but she could not get a dispensation from adding a postscript, which her ladyship, with profuse acknowledgments,

acknowledgments of a superiority never before admitted, besought her to add, to propitiate the earl in her favor. Peregrina knew she was in possession of an argument that might have efficacy; but this she did not chuse to entrust to any one, more particularly was she averse to informing of his lordship's faults the woman who had so many of her own. In covert language therefore she obeyed her, and wrote:

“ At Lady Almerina’s earnest request, Peregrina Lamorne presumes to add her petition for a candid allowance for, and forgiveness of, the errors so humbly acknowledged, and so atoned for, by the penitence of this letter. She trusts Lord Cottisbrooke will not insist on her using stronger arguments, which she assures him she has in reserve, and will not fail to make use of, to testify her concern for Lady Almerina, should his lordship withhold

hold the forgiveness she condescends to solicit."

This duty of charity discharged, she devoted the rest of the evening to writing to Ami Bonange; from whom the next morning's post brought her the following consolatory letter :

" I HAVE bestowed, my dearest madam, the whole of my attention, and the utmost energies of my art, on your situation. I know what are the dictates of your prudence, and in what strict conformity to them you have acted :—what are those of your heart, you must teach me yourself.

" Do you love Hamilton Courtland?—If you do, upon my honor, I will remove the obstacles to your union.—I have it in my power, and it *shall* be in my inclination, if it is your wish ; for I have no other than

to make you, if happiness could be conferred on mortals, happy.

“ Be sincere with me, Peregrina. I believe Courtland deserves you; for though he is laughed at for his universal adorations, and his gallery of beauties, I think you have fixed his heart. He is an honest fellow, and I am confident will deserve you, by his future conduct.

“ I tell you, it is in my power to remove all impediments.—Trust me, then, I do not mean to add to them.—I only would fairly inform you, that hereafter you may not reproach me, that, should you accept Courtland, as you safely may—as you will no longer need my protecting care, I shall cease to trouble you.

“ Should you reject Courtland, in pity to the feelings of a sincere, a guileless heart, I wish you could, amongst any other

other of your friends than those you are at present with, pass a few weeks.—Write immediately your real sentiments to

Your ever faithful

AMI BONANGE."

Here, in the generosity of one she knew not otherwise than by a reiteration of the most important kindnesses, were offered to her the means, not only of extricating herself from every difficulty, but of uniting herself for ever with those friends, of whose regard she was the best ascertained.—The idea raised her spirits, and enabled her to continue, with more vigor than she had begun, the preparations for her removal, which her native delicacy would not suffer her to dispense with. She could not so immediately answer all parts of Ami Bonange's letter as by that post: she therefore only added, to that she had already written, a postscript,

postscript, promising farther communications as soon as she should be settled at Frandiston park, and then bent her thoughts wholly to her journey, which, sanctioned as it would be, she now knew, by Ami's approbation, appeared less a matter of compulsion than of choice.

Nothing occurring to impede her scheme; and Courtland, either by his own or by his mother's contrivance, remaining from home, she bid a painful adieu to Lady Cottisbrooke. Poor Lady Effex could scarcely be restrained from following her, and Lady Almerina seemed affected at the parting, and condescended to enjoin Peregrina to write to her.

With feelings which decreased as she increased her distance from those who had excited them, and very much comforted by reflecting that, though she had on motives of propriety removed from Margate, it

it was in her power to return and be at peace there, she reached London in company with Mr. and Mrs. Blyford and their two eldest daughters, the rest travelling in chaises that followed their carriage. They were to remain in town only a few days, and then to set off for Frandiston park.

CHAP. XX.

THE business which had recalled Mrs. Halnaby and Joanna to Chatham, was of the most unpleasant kind. It was a letter from Lord Armathwaite, who was still in London, and who had been applied to by the governess of the school at which he had placed Miss Byram, with a request to see him immediately.

The young lady had, from the time of her admission, conducted herself in a way that led the governess almost to suspect that her friends had conceived her house to be a repository for insanity. Nothing could be more perverse than her conduct; and it was soon found, by experience, that no one of the methods, either of coercion

or indulgence, practised in the school, at all applied to her peculiar case. Human vigilance could not do more than was done to guard against the disposition she, from the moment of her entrance, manifested to get away ; but against Miss Byram the father of deceit himself could scarcely have been prepared ; and she was on the point of escaping, when her intention was discovered, and Lord Armathwaite was compelled to take her away, and restore her to the unfortunate Joanna, who, with a heavy heart, went home to receive her.

To shame Miss Byram was a stranger : no reproach could reach her ; punishment served but to harden her ; indulgence made her insolent ; persuasion she derided ; what she made others suffer she sometimes took for hypocrisy ; at other times for matter of sport : in short, a mind, in itself bad, was totally subverted by neglect in her education ; and scarcely any thing could exceed her depravity.

Yet

Yet could not Joanna, to whom every tie of life, heart-rending as it was to her, was dear, entirely exclude this her supposed offspring from her care. When urged to leave her to herself, her constant reply was, “ I would, were she not so like her father; but when I look at her, and recollect how dear she once was to my hopes, I forget the misery she makes me suffer.”

It was, however, become now absolutely impossible to treat her as one of the family; and, under the care of a resolute woman, paid enormously for the purpose, she was kept a sort of state prisoner, being allowed only to walk in the garden for exercise, and compelled to do a certain portion of work or to fast. On the least appearance of merit, her situation was mended; but she rarely put her friends to the trouble of altering their system.

Lord Armathwaite and Mrs. Hahnaby perceiving the power this ill-conditioned girl still retained of tormenting Joanna, against whom she seemed to have some secret spite, discussed with her the arguments for and against indulging her bias in religion, and ridding themselves of her by sending her to one of the few existing convents on the Continent; but to this, though the most likely means of releasing herself, she could not consent. She thought deeply of the immorality of encouraging her in what she herself conceived to be religious error; and however indifferent it might appear of what class of Christians a *good* mind might be, she saw that such a one as Miss Byram's would find the most pernicious shelter in a religion that she thought afforded her almost an impunity in sinning. Beside, in the continental turbulences no institution was safe; and she shuddered at the idea of her being thrown on the world, though perhaps the

young

young lady herself would have wished for no better sport. On these humane considerations she preferred enduring her lot, and only wished she could endure it alone.

Such friends as her's were not to be driven from her by her misfortunes, or the gloom they produced; and Lord Armathwaite foreseeing the probability that she might need active protection, no longer forbore to urge her fulfilling her promise to him. She had no plea against him; but for her own happiness she had so entirely lost all solicitude, that in her acquiescence she had no impulse but a wish to reward, as far as was in her power, the steadiness of his long attachment to her, and to calm the anxiety of Mrs. Halnaby, lest she might, by sudden death, leave her friendless.

In Chartham church, therefore, with as much privacy as possible, and with sensa-

tions scarcely less painful than those which had accompanied her former marriage, she gave her hand to Lord Armathwaite the last week in September; and to divert her thoughts from the scene of her anxieties, Mrs. Halnaby proposed a visit to her house in Berkshire, a circumstance which, had poor Peregrina known it, would have beyond measure delighted her, as it was but a few miles from Frandiston Park.

But this remove was for the present deferred by the illness of Miss Byram, who having escaped her governess's vigilance, and wandered into the woods till she was thoroughly cold and wet, had destroyed the hopes of Mrs. Halnaby, and relieved the fears of Joanna, by returning late at night, when she had the pleasure of awaking the servants to dry her clothes, and find her a supper. She was sent to bed in disgrace; and the next morning her spirit seemed somewhat subdued by a violent cold,

cold, which she was persuaded must kill her.

In this situation it was impossible for humanity to quit her. She grew worse every hour; and her obstinacy returning as her first fright wore off, she persisted in that refusal of medicine and discipline which was the most likely to rid her friends of all farther trouble.

Days and weeks Miss Byram's existence hung on the most doubtful thread, while she experienced from Lady Armathwaite, without the smallest token of acknowledgement on her part, every assiduity that humanity or maternal care could prompt. It was distraction to her ill-requited friend to think on her dying in her present temper of mind; but it was impossible to wake her out of it; for to all serious suggestions of the importance of religion at all times, but in particular in the hour of sickness, she replied by saying she should

do

do very well, and by kissing the Agnus Dei she wore as a charm ; and this ridiculous act of devotion was robbed even of the little credit due to superstition, by the language of her features which accompanied it, and which seemed to say, I am more cunning than any of you, for I know how to cheat Heaven itself.

Can it be possible, said Joanna to herself, in the agony of her heart, that this girl's intellects are sound ?—Can eighteen years have heaped up such a load of moral turpitude ?—Can there be such cause, as I fancy, to fear for the eternal state of a creature who so short a time has experienced the corruption of the world ?

In eight and twenty days the matter seemed almost decided ; and Lady Armathwaite, worn to a state of weakness almost as great as the patient's, was forced out of the room, that she might not see her recover,

ver, for the last time, from a state of insensibility, the precursor of her dissolution.

It was the dead of night when she quitted her; and on the stairs she met a servant, who in haste was bringing her a letter. She could attend to no business, and it was carried to Lord Armathwaite, who was sitting below stairs with Mrs. Halnaby. A special messenger had brought it, and must have an immediate answer; he was in a post chaise, and seemed to expect some one to go back with him. The letter was from Lady Jemima to Miss Byram, and in very few words requested her to leave Chartham instantly with the bearer, who would conduct her to Coventry, where she waited to see her on business of the utmost importance.

Lord Armathwaite suspecting this to be some ill-executed plan of the dying girl's, in which his sister might or might not be concerned,

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concerned, returned as an answer only these words :

“ Miss Byram lies at the point of death.”

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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